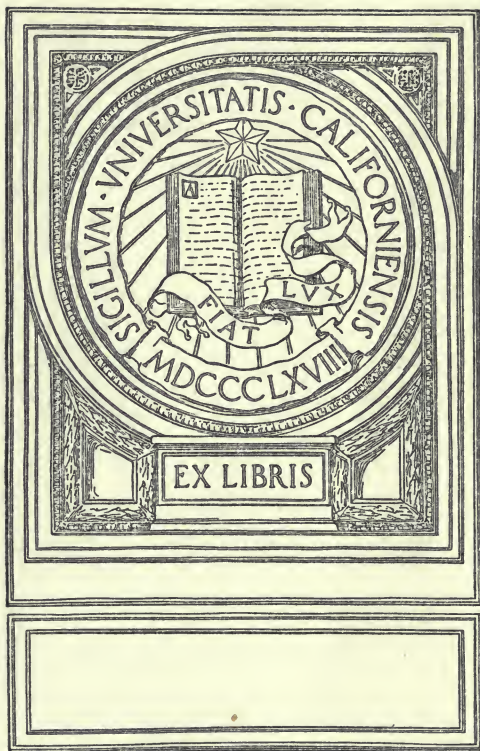


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BRUCE

BOOKS BY JOHN DAVIDSON.

THE NORTH WALL. 1884. Glasgow: Wilson & McCormick.

Transferred by the Author to the present publishers (2s. 6d. net).

BRUCE: A DRAMA. 1886. Glasgow: Wilson & McCormick.

Transferred by the Author to the present publishers (5s. net)

SMITH: A TRAGEDY. 1888. Glasgow: Fred. W. Wilson & Brother.

PLAYS. 1889. Greenock: John Davidson.

Transferred by the Author to the present publishers (5s. net).

N.B.—A few Copies of this Book were issued in 1890 with the imprint of Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, under the title of "Scaramouch in Naxos, a Pantomime, and other Plays."

PERFERVID. 1890. London: Ward & Downey.

MONTESQUIEU'S "LETTRES PERSANES," A TRANSLATION,
with Introduction and Notes. 2 vols. 1891. London (published by
J. C. Nimmo, but without his imprint).

THE GREAT MEN AND A PRACTICAL NOVELIST. 1891.
London: Ward & Downey.

N.B.—"A Practical Novelist" is "The North Wall," with some
slight revision and the last chapter omitted.

IN A MUSIC HALL, AND OTHER POEMS. 1891. London:
Ward & Downey.

FLEET STREET ECLOGUES. 1893. London: Elkin Mathews
and John Lane (5s. net). *Second Edition.*

BAPTIST LAKE. 1893. London: Ward & Downey. *In the Press.*

BRUCE

A Drama in Five Acts

BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

AUTHOR OF "THE NORTH WALL"

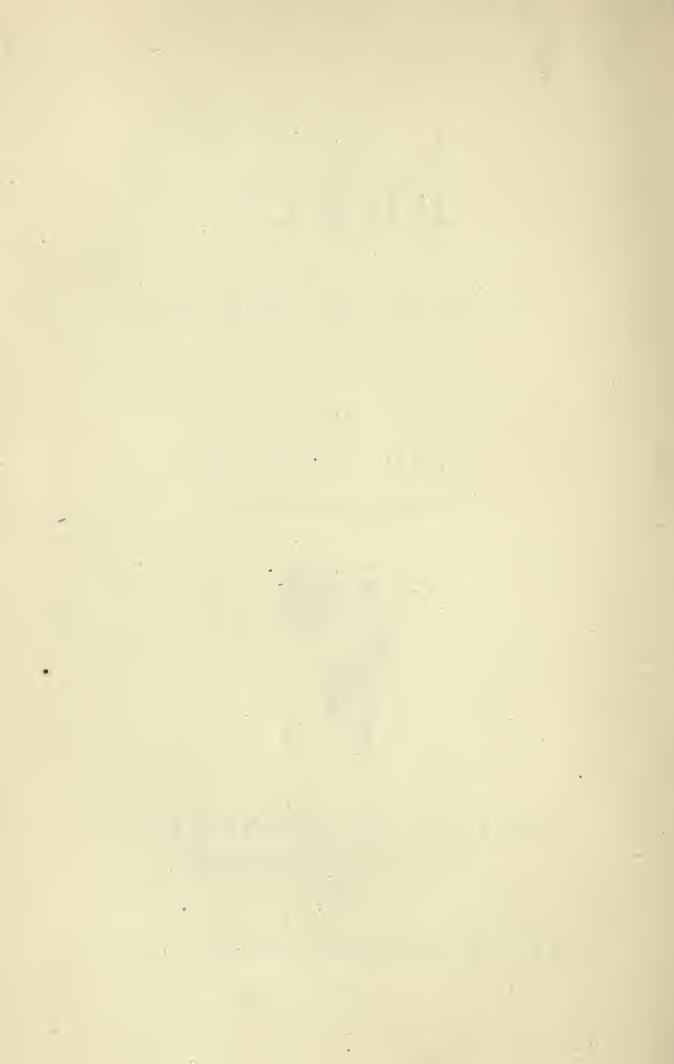


LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS *and* JOHN LANE

THE BODLEY HEAD, VIGO STREET

1893



TO

My Friend,

DAVID PATON, ESQ.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ROBERT BRUCE, <i>Earl of Carrick, afterwards King of Scotland.</i>	EDWARD I., <i>King of England.</i>
EDWARD BRUCE.	EDWARD II., <i>King of England.</i>
NIGEL BRUCE.	<i>The Earl of PEMBROKE.</i>
LAMBERTON, <i>Archbishop of St. Andrews.</i>	LORD HENRY PERCY.
WALTER, <i>the Steward of Scotland.</i>	LORD ROBERT CLIFFORD.
SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.	SIR INGRAM DE UMFRAVILLE.
SIR JAMES DOUGLAS.	SIR GILES DE ARGENTINE.
SIR THOMAS RANDOLF.	SIR PETER MALLORIE, <i>Justice of England.</i>
SIR CHRISTOPHER SETON.	HUGH BEAUMONT.
SIR JOHN SETON.	ISABELLA, <i>Countess of Carrick, afterwards Queen of Scotland.</i>
JAMES CROMBE.	ISOBEL, <i>Countess of Buchan.</i>
KIRKPATRICK.	<i>Countess of BADENOCH.</i>
COMYN, <i>Earl of Badenoch.</i>	LADY DOUGLAS.
COMYN, <i>Earl of Buchan.</i>	
MACDUFF, <i>Earl of Fife.</i>	
SIR ROBERT COMYN.	

An Old Man, a Young Friar, a Messenger, a Forester, a Spy. Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Monks, Soldiers, etc.

Scene :—LONDON and SCOTLAND.

BRUCE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—LONDON. *A Room in the Palace.*

KING EDWARD I., EARL OF PEMBROKE,
LORD HENRY PERCY, and LORD ROBERT
CLIFFORD.

Edward I. Once more, my lords, the rude
north claims our care.

A faction there is still opposed to peace,
Strongly ill-willed to England and to me,
Obdurate, set, incorrigibly wroth—

A band whose blood is of the liquid flame
That often madly jets in savage veins,
When wisdom would bestow some blessed
gift,

Some pearl which ignorance rejects with scorn,

And chafes and frets and sets the world on
fire.

The Bruce, my lords, has fled the English
court :

He goes to Scotland, and his guiding star

Is that same beacon of rebellious light

Built up by every burning Scottish heart.

Astonishment and curious desire

Shouldering each other in your eyes I see,

Like townsmen gazing from a window's height

At some strange pageantry afoot below ;

There let them crowd, for wonders are to pass.

Were I to ask you, now, if Bruce or Comyn

Has played the fairer game you might say this:

They cannot be compared—Bruce always
with,

And Comyn always opposite to me ;

Yet have they both held by the cause they
chose,

So there's a parity of constancy.

Such answer might be yours. Then I would
say,

They both are faithless: here I hold the proof.

[*Exhibits a scroll.*

This is a deed transferring Bruce's lands
To Comyn, who exchanges for the same
His claim—it's written so—to Scotland's
crown.

He promises besides to aid the Bruce
To gain the state and name of King of Scots.
There are their signatures.

Pembroke. How chances it
That this indenture lies in your royal hands?

Edward I. John Comyn sent it me. You
see—base rogues!—
Bruce false to me, and Comyn false to Bruce.

Pembroke. My liege, Bruce hitherto has
borne a name
As bright and glorious as his golden shield,
Untarnished by dishonour's rusty breath.
This paper may be forged.

Edward I. That was my thought ;
And so I had a copy of it made,
And sent to Bruce last night. My messenger

Asked, being charged so far, some word from him.

He half denied ; but compromised, and craved
Three days to answer. So much grace I gave.
This is the first day, and last night he fled.

Pembroke. A sign of guilt. What will your
highness do ?

Edward I. With your good counsel, lords,
doubtless, the best !

Percy. To horse, and take the knave alive
or dead !

Edward I. A speedy finish ; but consider
this :

Comyn and Bruce divide the land of Scots ;
They now are mortal foes ; why need we stir
To fight two cocks who will each other slay
Between the high walls of their Scottish pit ?
Yet Pembroke, Clifford, and bold Harry Percy
Be ready at a word to lead your knights
Across the border.

Percy. Nor can that summons come
Too soon for Harry Percy.

Pembroke. Nor for Pembroke.

Clifford. And Clifford will not be the last to
hear.

Edward I. I would prefer that your alacrity,
Pleasing and comfortable as it is,
Were from the proof removed a farther cast :
And so were Wallace wise as he is wight
It would be. Twice I offered grace and love,
If he would govern Scotland in my name.
He thanked me for my grace and for my love,
But at my terms he laughed as at a jest.
Had he accepted them, I say again,
As there is none so fit to rule the Scots,
Your willing service had been hardly asked.

Percy. Let me say this : had such a league
been struck
Between your highness and the valiant Scot,
You might have borne your banners through
the world.

Pembroke. What specious arguments could
Wallace urge ?

Edward I. O, ask me not ! My patience
served me ill

To hear him out. How can I then rehearse
His saucy reasons, wasting breath and wrath !
Within short space you all shall hear himself ;
A fortnight hence, I think, he will be tried.
And now, Lord Clifford, James of Douglas
comes

To claim his father's lands, which you possess.
Tell me, who knows, what kind of man he is,
That we may judge how he will bear himself ?

Clifford. A man of men, although my mortal
foe.

I knew him well in Paris ere these broils.
Unarmed, a gentle blitheness graced his style :
A dainty lisp engaged his auditors
With tickling pleasure ; such a piquant touch
Was in the Scottish Hector, as they called
him,
Tripping with helpless tongue, like rose-lipped
girls.

But when he armed his body, then his soul
Was harnessed in a dress of adamant :
His gentle look, hard-tempered to a frown,
With gloom could shade the thund'rous scowl
of heaven ;

His voice was like a lion's ; and his arm
Wielded his sword with lightning speed and
force.

In council-halls, o'er ladies' lutes, in war,
Brave, courteous, wise, loyal to truth, he was :
So is he: Douglas changes but for good.

Edward I. You praise him highly. You
shall answer him.

He comes. Make room.

(*Enter SIR JAMES DOUGLAS.*)

We know your errand, sir.
Speak, and Lord Clifford here will answer
you.

Douglas. Lord Clifford will, and must : be
sure of that.

I also crave King Edward's open ear.

Clifford will reckon with me for my land :
You, sire, must render an account of blood.

Clifford. Clifford has yet to learn why
Douglas dare
Speak such a swift defiance.

Edward I. (turning his back to DOUGLAS.)

Answer him
On this wise, my good lord :—Your father,
sir,
A faithless felon, died a prisoner
In Edward's dungeon ; and his forfeit lands
Reverted to the crown. It pleased the king
To make me lord of Douglasdale. Go, then,
Buy land where'er you may, I keep my own.
He has his answer, follow me, my lords.

[*Exeunt* EDWARD I., PEMBROKE, CLIFFORD,
and PERCY.]

Douglas. There's justice in the heavens if
not in kings !
He might have listened. It is very plain
King Edward means to play the tyrant now.

Yet tyrants can be courteous. Insolent !
To toss an answer o'er his shoulder at me,
Whetting with crude affront, the pointed
"No,"

As one would check a cringing beggar's plea.
One way is left, a flinty, narrow way,
The rebel's way, the way I still have shunned :
And yet it seems not hard, but easy, broad,
Since I elect to be a traveller there.

Now though it be as hopeless as to stem
The Solway's tide, or toss the deep-based
Bass

From Forth to France, with all my strength
I'll fight

Against this tyrannous usurping king.

How strange that I should find rebellion's
storm

The happy haven where my troubles end !

But so it is : my cares are blown away ;

Light-hearted vigour is my lot once more ;

And trampled conscience, like the heath
released,

Springs up, and breathes sweet scent of ap-
probation.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — DUMFRIES. *The Greyfriars Church.*

Enter BRUCE and COMYN OF BADENOCH.

Comyn. I thought you were in London,
cousin mine.

Bruce. And still would have me there, or
anywhere,
But by your side.

Comyn. Why is your tongue so harsh,
Your eye so big, your face so dimmed with
ire?

Bruce. Why falter you? Why has your
colour fled?
Why, but because my tongue still speaks its
thought;
Because my face wears not the darker show
Of death's grimace upon a spear's long neck,
Grotesquely ornamenting London Bridge;

Because my limbs are not the bait of crows,
The gazing-stock of crowds in Scotland's
towns ;

Because I live and am at liberty :
These are the reasons why you tremble now.

Comyn. Not so ; it is because I think you
mad :

These monstrous breathings are insanity :
You shake with passion, hissing out your
words.

I fear you ; and I will have witnesses,
Or no more conference.

[*Going.*

Bruce. (*seizing his arm.*) With honest men
God is sufficient witness. Are you true ?
You know my ground of wrath as well as I.

Comyn. Your words are like your brow,
darker than night.

Bruce. Be this the sun that shall illumine
them.

[*Exhibits a scroll.*

Sun, said I ! rather inky light of hell,
Whereby you may behold your treachery.
I see it's true what I have heard of men,
Who, knowing right, pursue a wrongful
course :

Custom uprears athwart the source of shame
A fragile dam ; but when another marks
The waves that beat behind, they swell and
burst

The sandy sea-wall of hypocrisy,
Like a packed gulf delivered by the moon.
'That flood is in your face : you blush like
fire.

Comyn. I blush to be accused of this great
wrong.

Bruce. Comyn, you lie. Look, see, the very
words
Of that compact, which we with aching hearts
Drew up and signed and swore in Stirling
town.

Have you forgotten how we wept hot tears
Condoling over Scotland's misery ?

Its fertile plains that richer were than gold,
Burnt up with fire, salted with tears and
blood ;

Its cots and palaces confounded low
In stony litters that the soil reclaims ;
Its wealthy towns and pleasant places sacked ;
Its people ?—Ah ! we could not sound our
grief

For wives made widows ; husbands, left
alone ;

And children, blighted by too early bareness
Of parents' comfortable snowy wisdom :
Death and destruction feasting everywhere.

We found ourselves to blame ; therefore we
wept,

Repenting of our jealousy and strife.

This pact united us in friendship's bond

For ever to oppose the English rule.

We prayed that our conjunction, like two
stars

Meeting auspiciously for Scotland's weal,
Might yield its war-worn people prosperous
peace ;

And o'er the border cast calamities

Of such deserved and overwhelming woe,
That England never more should be inclined,
Nor have the power to wage a conquering
war.

We then embraced, and you with trembling
breath

Thanked God that Bruce and Comyn now
were friends.

Two copies of our compact we endorsed.
Here is a third that's neither yours nor mine :
King Edward sent it me ; whence had he it ?

Comyn. Unless King Edward sent it back
to you,
You having given it him, I cannot tell.

Bruce. God keep my hands from blood ! O
soulless wretch !

Obtuse, unthinking liar ! Could I note
The shape of good that dances in your brain
To be matured for service by denial,
Perhaps that might extenuate your lie.
But knowing nothing save your treachery,
And hardened daring of a damning fact,

Relentless hate expels all dreams of love
That harboured once toward you within my
heart.

Comyn. If, then, your rage is for the present
spent,

A few plain words may hope for audience.
What proof have you that Edward had this
writ

Through me or mine? Impartial sense would
blame,

Not me, who ever have been Scotland's friend,
And foremost in opposing Edward's power,
But you the truckling lord, inheriting
And practising your father's policy,
Which was to follow at the Longshanks' heel,
And fawn for smiles, and wait his highness'
whim

To pay the lacqueying with a dirty crown.

Bruce. This idle mockery becomes you well.
Did any doubt remain of your dark sin,
The hunting out a mote within my eye
To poise the beam that does disfigure yours,
Would make me sure.

Comyn. What legal proof, I say?

Bruce. The laws of God, honour, and loyalty
Condemn you traitor to their interests.

I judge you guilty, for I know right well
King Edward never had this scroll from me,
And no one else could give it him but you.
Your heart condemns you, though you brave
it thus.

Comyn. And yet I say again, I swear by
heaven,
I never saw that paper till to-day.

Bruce. Talk not of seeing!—Come to the
altar here.

[*They advance to the altar.*

Now lay your hand upon the traitorous sheet,
Call God to witness that you speak the truth,
And swear once more you have not broken
faith.

Beneath your feet the dust of true men rests,
Your ancestors and mine ; this lofty roof,

These consecrated walls and columns high
Are wont to hear the sounds of sacred song,
The gospel of the holy Christ of God ;
This in God's house; this altar is God's throne.
Now, can you swear? You will not do it,
sure.

Comyn. And what shall hinder me while I
have breath?

Without my instigation or connivance
Our compact reached the King. If God's in
heaven,
And I speak false, may I this moment die.

Bruce. (stabbing COMYN, who falls.) God
is in heaven, and my hand wields his
wrath ! . . .

What have I done? A madman's dreadful
deed !

I was engulfed, and now I'm cast ashore.
O, in our passionless, reflective hours
We lock emotion in a glass-walled jail
Of crisp philosophy ; or give it scope
As far as Will, the turnkey, may allow

The chain of prudence to enlarge its steps !
But to some sense a small distraction comes—
Across the sight a butterfly, a flower—
The fetters snap, the prison crumbles—off !—
To clasp the air where shone our will-o-wisp !
For no gewgaw have I burst reason's bonds,
But to avenge a gross iniquity
That clamoured brazenly to heaven and earth.
O, it was human !—It was devilish !
Here, on the altar—O, the sacrilege !
That man of my own blood, whom I adjured
By every holy thing, to speak no wrong,
I do wrong, slaying. O, heinous sacrilege !—
Perhaps he is not dead. Comyn, look up ;
Speak ; make some sign. Alas ! that fatal
 blow
Was aimed too surely at my cousin's heart !
I used God's name too when I struck him
 dead !
O horrid blasphemy ! The sacrilege !

[*Going.*

[*Enter KIRKPATRICK.*

Kirkpatrick. My Lord !

Bruce. I fear I have slain Comyn. [*Exit.*

Kirkpatrick. Ha !

You fear !—Then I'll make sure. He opes
his eyes.

Comyn. False—foolish—dying—guilty—
perjured—lost !

[*Dies.*

Kirkpatrick. (stabbing Comyn.) Something to
staunch your muttering. No fear, now.

[*Enter SIR ROBERT COMYN with his
sword drawn.*

Robert Comyn. Stop villain ! Hold your
hand, rash murderer !

Kirkpatrick. I only gave a grace-thrust to
your nephew
To end his agony. Put up your sword.
He died a good death on the altar-steps.

Robert Comyn. Kirkpatrick, you have aided
in a deed,
Unseconded, even in these fearful times.

Kirkpatrick. Strong words and stiffly spoken.
Does your sword
Keep pace with your sharp tongue?

Robert Comyn. We'll try.

Kirkpatrick. Come on!

[*They fight and ROBERT COMYN falls.*

Robert Comyn. Is this the day of judgment
for our house?
Kinsman, I was your follower on earth,
And now I am your henchman through
death's vale.

[*Dies.*

[*Enter EDWARD BRUCE, SIR CHRISTOPHER
and SIR JOHN SETON, and other gentlemen.*

Sir Christopher Seton. Two Comyns dead!
Bruce only spoke of one.

Kirkpatrick. I slew the other. He would have me fight.

Sir John Seton. Alas! and could it be no other way?

There was enough dissension in the realm
Without a feud between these families,
Highest in state, and strongest in the field.

1st. Gentleman. Comyn is dead, and Bruce has laid him low.

The dead may slay the living. What say you?

2nd. Gentleman. I say so too. The stroke that Comyn killed
May yet recoil upon his murderer.

Edward Bruce. Judge not, my friends. A murder has been done
With outward signs of most unrighteous wrath.
But think who did the deed—the noblest Scot,

The knightliest chevalier, the kindest friend,
The prince of brothers. I, who know, say
this.

The very horror and the sacrilege
That frame the crime with dreder circum-
stance,

Cry out the doer was insane the while,
And recommend him to your lenience.

Therefore, take warning ; and before you
judge

Let your bloods cool, lest you be guilty too
Of foolish rashness in your condemnation.

My brother left a message for you all :

He asks you who are friends to visit him

To-morrow at Lochmaben ; where he means

To lay the matter of his crime before you,

And take your counsel on the consequence.

1st Gentleman. It's fair we should withhold
our judgment, sirs,

Until we be possessed of this event,

The cause and manner of its happening.

[*Shouting within. Enter NIGEL BRUCE.*

Nigel Bruce. The people want a leader,
crying out,
“Down with the Southron! Let us take the
castle!”

The news of Comyn’s death has made them
mad;

If blood were wine, and they had drunk of it
To fulness, they could not be more mature
For any mischief that the time suggests.

Edward Bruce. Good mischief, if the English
suffer it.

I’ll be their captain. Cæsar pricked his horse
Across the Rubicon defying Rome.

Bruce pricked John Comyn over death’s dark
stream

Defying England. Cæsar triumphed: Bruce
Shall triumph too, and now begins the fight.
Down with the Southron! Bruce for Scot-
land! Ho!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Same. Monks enter and
lay the bodies side by side. A bell tolls,*

and the monks kneel round the altar.
Then enter the COUNTESS OF BADENOCH,
and COMYN, EARL OF BUCHAN, *and the*
COUNTESS OF BUCHAN.

Buchan. You holy men give place a little
while.

A Monk. To whom ?

Buchan. The wife and friends of slaughtered
Comyn.

[*The monks retire.*

Countess of Badenoch. Would any mortal
think to look at me
This dead man was my husband? Should I
weep,
And rend with sighs my breast, and wring
my hands ;
Peal out my sorrow, like a vesper bell
Calling the cloistered echoes' shadowy choir
To take the burden of a woeful dirge ;
Enrobe myself in that dishevellment

Which tyrannous grief compels his subjects
pale

To show their vassalage by putting on,
I might persuade myself and you, my friends,
That I am sorry for my husband's death :

Even as an actor, lacking any cue,

Visible, tangible, as I have here,

Steps lightly at a word upon the stage,

Leaving his brothers and their merry chat,

And takes upon him any passion's show

With such devotion and abandonment,

That what was first a cloak becomes a soul,

And audience and actor both are held

Dissolved in ecstasy ; which, breaking, back

From high heroics to sad homeliness

Their spirits are precipitated straight.

But I'll not play the broken-heart, for you,

My friends, my audience, know the cause I
have

Rather to laugh than weep. O wretched
corpse !

What habitation holds the spirit now,

Which Bruce ejected rashly, warrantless,

Pulling the house about the tenant's ears ?

Buchan. He loved me little, and he loved
you less ;
And by his death he leaves a legacy,
The taking up of which, if spirits watch
From where eternally they rest or pine,
Our tragic, many-scened mortality,
Will reconcile him to his sudden death.

Countess of Buchan. Husband, what legacy ?

Buchan. A mortal feud.

Countess of Buchan. Will you avenge on
Bruce the death of him
Whom his best friends lament not ?

Buchan. Yes, I must.
And good Sir Robert, too—his blood cries
out.
It is a duty that the world will look
To see performed directly and with speed,
Admitting no perfunct, half-passive dance
On patient providence. Dissuade me not,
For it becomes you not. There is a thing

That vaguely circulates in certain spheres
Concerning you, my dearest. Sad am I
That from my lips it first should taint your
ears ;

But you must know it now. Give me your
hand.

This white and fragrant palm from guilty
deeds,

That harden more than penitential toil,
Or from the touch of slime, is not more free,
Than your unshriven soul from infant
thoughts

Swaddled in shame. But foul-tongued
calumny,

Tutored by hatred, like a jabbering bird
With implication lewd repeats your name
And Bruce's in a breath.

Countess of Buchan. Alas, I know !

The lying scandal that benights my life
Will be a foil to make my memory shine.—

If it confronts you graven on the sky
To visit retribution on his head

Whose hand laid low your cousin's, be it so :

I'll not invade your secrets ; but I mean
To do what woman can for Bruce's cause,
Which whispers tell me will be Scotland's
soon.

Buchan. Well, we'll not quarrel. We'll talk
of this again.

Countess of Badenoch. Come, take me home.
I'm in a gentler mood.
Let those good cowls return and pray their
best.

[*Exeunt the COUNTESS OF BADENOCH, and
the COUNT and COUNTESS OF BUCHAN.
The monks advance and kneel, and the
scene closes.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—LOCHMABEN. *A Room in the Castle. Enter LAMBERTON, ARCHBISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS, EDWARD and NIGEL BRUCE, the two SETONS, SIR THOMAS RANDOLF, and other lords and gentlemen.*

Lamberton. My lords and gentlemen, this is
no time

For ceremony, which, when lazy peace
Has rusted o'er the world's slack businesses,
Oils easily the motion of affairs ;
For now events impel each other on,
And higher powers than beadles usher them.
I am commissioned by the noble Bruce
To greet you heartily and wish you well,
While you remain within Lochmaben's walls.
By my advice he begs you to excuse
His absence, while I speak. When you have
heard

I doubt not that you will. He has confessed
The sacrilegious crime of yesterday,
Contritely and with simple truthfulness.
No exculpation, no defence at all,
Such as we know there is, he offered me.
Some of us here may hold that Bruce's act
Should rather be extolled than stigmatized.
We know for certain now what was the wrong
That Comyn having wrought denied on oath,
And all our sympathy goes out to Bruce.
But such is the deceitfulness of sin
That feelings of the sweetest comfort oft
Mislead us to embrace iniquity.
Man's worst of deeds God turns to good
account.
A penance, which I hope will work God's
will,
I have enjoined on the humiliate earl ;
A labour as transcendent in its kind
As ever travailed hero Hercules.
I mean to crown him, Robert, King of Scots :
His task will be to make that title good.
Now I have said a word that stirs your blood,
Begetting hope and courage, valiant twins.

And yet it is not I that speak, but God :
Surely God speaks. The sequence of events,
Of which this conference is the latest bud,
Appears to me a heavenly oracle,
As evident as Aaron's sprouting rod,
Commanding Robert Bruce to be the King.
He would have placed the crown on Comyn's
head,
Had Comyn wished, that Scotland might be
one ;
But Comyn thought to get the crown by
guile,
And weakly, wickedly betrayed his friend,
Setting between him and the English king
A gulf of enmity impassable.
Edward will judge him out of church and
law ;
But in our Scotch communion he is safe :
And being out of law, there is no way,
Except to be our King, above the law.
Needs must, my lords ; and is not need God's
will ?

Edward Bruce. It is the will of God.

All. Bruce shall be King.

(*Enter* BRUCE)

Long live the King ! Long live King Robert
Bruce !

Bruce. You hail me by a name that may be
mine

In more than word, but not without your aid.
There are not many Scots besides yourselves
Who will acknowledge me their King. Think
well

Before you pledge your faith to one out-
lawed ;

For so I am, if law depend on power.

Scotland, the Isles, and England are my
foes :

My friends are individual ; on my hands
They may be counted. Lennox, Athole,
Cairns,

Fleming, the Hayes, the Frasers, Sommerville,
Glasgow, and Moray, sum the list with you :
These only are the Scots whom I may rule.

Sir Christopher Seton. Then only these deserve the name of Scot.

Lamberton. Right, Seton !

Randolf. We are Scots, the rest are slaves !
Freeman and Scot have ever meant the same.

Lamberton. Carrick or King ?

Bruce. King, by God's will and yours.

Lamberton. Sometimes we please ourselves
with images

Of deeds heroic. The unstabled thought,
Enfranchised by rough-riding passion, winds
A haughty course and laughs at depth and
height :

But the blood tires ; and lo ! our thought, a
steed,

That from his rider ever takes the mood,
Pants, droops, turns tail, and hobbles home
to stall.

Look in yourselves, and see if vain conceit
Or lofty daring, lord it o'er your minds.

This thing is sure : reason must be constrained :
You must be hot, believing, fanatic ;
You must be wrathful, patriotic, rash ;
Forethought abandon o'er to providence ;
Let prudence lag behind you, like a snail,
Bearing its house with care upon its back ;
Take counsel only of the circumstance
That shapes itself in doing of the deed ;
Be happy, scornful, death-defiant : strong
You will be then, matchless, invincible.
What ! shall we go to Scone, and crown Bruce
King ?

Randolf. At once, Lord Archbishop.

Sir John Seton. To Glasgow, first,
To take our friends there with us.

Lamberton. That is best.
Is it your will to be crowned King at Scone ?

Bruce. Most reverend father, and my noble
friends,
If language were to me in place of thought,
I could pour grateful speeches in your ears ;

But words are wanting. I am helpless, dumb;
I would be lonely; I would think awhile.

Lamberton. Think worthy thoughts, that
only second are
To worthy deeds; yet their begetters too.
We'll leave you till our little troop's arrayed.

Bruce. You are very kind, my Lords.

[*Exeunt all except BRUCE.*

I'm not a man
Much given to meditate. When pending
thoughts
Hurtle each other in the intellect,
Darkening that firmament like thunder-clouds,
To let them lighten forth in utterance
Clears up the sky, confused with swaying rack.
My life begins a new departure here;
And like one dying all my time appears
Even on the instant, in eternal light.
Ambition struck the hours that measured it.
My pact with Comyn was half-hearted. What!
The passion that laid hold upon my soul

When he was killed—When he was killed ?

I think

I'm to myself too merciful ; but yet

I seemed to do some bidding :—were there
not

Alloys of gladness that the bond was loosed,
Of jealousy that Comyn barred my way
Mixed in the blow that paid the traitor's
wage ?

There are two voices whispering in my ear.

This is the bane of self-communion. Now,

Right in thy teeth, or in thy toothless chaps,

I swear, antiquity, first thoughts are best :

Their treble notes I still shall hearken to,

And let no second, murmuring soft, seduce

Their clear and forthright meaning. It is
gone,

The flash of revelation : dallying does

With intuition as with other chance.

I would to God that I might ever hear

The trump of doom pealing along the sky,

And know that every common neighbour day

Is the last day, and so live on and fight

In presence of the judgment. Wishing this

Have I not broached the very heart of truth ?
Each unmarked moment is an end of time,
And this begins the future.

[*Enter ISABELLA.*

Isabella !

Isabella. What in this time of doleful accidents
Could move the joyful shouts I heard just
now ?

Bruce. My dearest, what would make you
shout for joy ?

Isabella. I have not shouted since I was a
girl ;
But now, I think, if any happy thing
Should spring into my life I would cry out,
I have been so unhappy, and so long.
Tell me you'll never leave me any more ;
Then will I cry, and weep, for very joy.

Bruce. Heaven grant it may be so !

Isabella. If there is hope !—
Did I not shout now ?—I will nurse it warm,
And pet it like a darling, till it come
To be what I imagine in the fact,
Or in the fancy ; for I will go mad :
I'll bend myself to lose all faculty,
All thought, remembrance, all intelligence,
So to be capable of company
With your phantasm, more real than than
 life ;
And be a wild mad woman, if those fears,
Those weary absences, those partings pale,
And fevered expectations, which have filled
The summer of our life with storm and cold,
Determine not in peace and halcyon days.
You do not love me as I love you ; no ;
Else you would never leave me. Love of
 power
And love of me hold tourney in your breast.
Let Will throw down the baton, and declare
The love of me the winner, and I'll be
Your queen of love ; and beautiful as love
For man can make a woman. I am proud :
When love transfigures me I can conceive

How beautiful I am. Stay with me, then,
That holy, sweet, and confident desire
May light me up a pleasant bower for you :
I am, when you are gone, a house forlorn,
Cold, desolate, and hasting to decay :
Stay, tenant me, preserve me in repair ;
Only sweet uses keep sweet beauty fair.

Bruce. I love you, Isabella, by high heaven,
More than the highest power that can be
mine.

Isabella. Why then pursue this power so
ardently ?

Bruce. I stayed pursuit ; but it would follow
me.
My countrymen have asked me to be King.

Isabella. King !—But you murdered Comyn.
All his friends—
Forgive me, love. I would not for the world
Reproach you ; but——

Bruce. I know your gentle heart.
My thought of you is not the morning bride ;
Nor even the rose that oped its balmy breast
And gave its nectar sweetly. In my mind
This memory of you crowds out the rest :
The woman who with tender arms embraced
The bloody murderer. I know your heart.

Isabella. Hush !

Bruce. Friends are few ; but if my title's
good ?
Hopeless the cause ; but if the cause be just ?
I'm glad my hand that did my passion's hest
Has made my mind up for me.

Isabella. You'll be king ?

Bruce. Will I be hunted like a common
knave
Who stabs his comrade in a drunken brawl
For some rude jest or ruder courtesan,
And, being an outlaw, dies by any hand ?
I'd rather be the King ; and though I die

The meanest death, be held in memory
As one who, having entered on a course
Of righteous warfare by a gate of shame,
Pursued it with his might, and made amends
For starting false—so far as lay in him ;
For out of him his sin is, stablished, past,
And by a life's atonement unredeemed.
I do not brood on this. Before you came
I had better thoughts.

Isabella. O, I am sad at that !

Bruce. I love you : not from you those worse
thoughts sprang.

Isabella. Perhaps they did : for I have some-
times found,
When I have spent an hour in decking me,
But thinking more to please you in my life
Than in my dress, that, coming then to you,
Brimming with tenderness, some thoughtless
word,
Or even a look from you has changed my
mood,

And made me deem the world a wilderness ;
While this cross glance, or inauspicious tone,
Was but a feint of yours, whose strength of
love

Withheld itself, afraid it should undo
Its purpose by endeavouring too much :
And we have parted, discontented both.
But we'll not part now. Say, we shall not
part.

Bruce. Not now. We will be crowned together, queen.

Isabella. ' But then ' succeeds ' not now ; ' I
hope, far off.

Bruce. We must prepare to go.

Isabella. So soon !

Bruce. Our friends
Await us, chafing doubtless at delay.

Isabella. Then I will make a proverb lie for
once,

And be on horseback sooner than my lord.

[*Excunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Road in Dumfriesshire. Enter*
BRUCE, ISABELLA, *and a* SQUIRE.

Bruce. Look to our horses while we rest.

[*Exit* SQUIRE.

Isabella. How far
Are we before our friends ?

Bruce. See, they appear.

Isabella. That little puff of dust ?

Bruce. Our company,
Three miles away I think. The road is straight,
And slopes to us. I hear a hoof—this side.

Isabella. It is a solitary knight, but one

Who need not fear to ride afar, alone,
If I may trust a woman's hasty eye.
He is dismounting ; he unhelms, he bows ;
He seems to know you, and salute you king !

Enter SIR JAMES DOUGLAS.

Bruce. Douglas ! I thought that Paris would
retain
For years to come the service of your youth.

Douglas. You speak as one whom some
transcending hap
Has shewn the high and secret worth of life ;
And such am I, or else discourtesy
Alone had greeted me in what you said.
Not with shrunk purse, drained veins, and
heart dried-up ;
Will, broken-winded ; pith-brains ; sinews
—straw,
From Paris, which unstiffens many a one,
Come I to Scotland, where is need of strength.
A love of noble things—a kind of faith—
A hope, a wish, a thought above the world,

Has swayed me from the mire ; and yet I
know
It is a miracle I'm not more soiled.

Bruce. I spoke unworthily of this reply,
And gladly now unsay my hinted charge,
Which, with less thought than commonplace,
I made ;
Though I should utter nothing now but
thought,
For as you judged I see a soul in life.
And what in Scotland do you think to do ?

Douglas. Retrieve my lands, avenge my
father's death,
And drive the English from its borders.
Here
I offer Scotland's king my lance, and here
I vow to be his lady's loyal knight.
You are amazed. They say, ill news spreads
fast :
He whom the tidings then will halcyon
Knows of his weal as soon as he his woe.
Is the news good to you that Bruce is king ?

Bruce. The news is good : best, that he's
king of you.

I wonder most at that. I stood in arms
Against your father, and but yesterday
I seemed the friend of England.

Douglas. Yesterday
Was once the date of every lasting change.
While you are faithful to the land that's yours,
I swear to serve you faithfully till death.

Bruce. Another trusty friend when friends
are few—
And such a friend ! Welcome, a thousand
times !

Isabella. A happy handselling of our enter-
prize !
What is the news from England ? Have you
heard
If Wallace has been judged ?

Douglas. Not yet ; but soon
In Westminster he will be doomed to death ;

For victory, which oft ennobles kings,
Debases Edward. Since he has not grace,
The gracious-hearted world with one outcry
Should claim the life of Wallace for its own,
As the most noble life lived in this age,
And not to be cut off by one man's hate.

Bruce. The thought of Wallace troubles me.

The truth

That great men seldom in their times are
known;

And this that little men are eminent

In midst of their thin lives and loud affairs,

Assert how perilous election is

By peers all bound and circumstanced alike.

If he were solely moved by noble thoughts,

And is the signal hero you give out—

Nothing I say, and nothing I deny—

Then were the nobles who deserted him

Unworthy cowards, beggars, churls, knaves,
hounds.

Shall I condemn my order so? or think

That Wallace hoped to aggrandize himself,

And lost those friends who had no need to
fight

For mere existence when the restive hoof
Of personal ambition kicked aside

The patriot's caparison? You wince:

But with the time I drift, and cannot find
A mooring for my judgment. Pardon me.

This I believe: there is no warrior

Before the world, who could, even with those
means

Of formal power that Wallace mostly lacked,
Have wrought the tithe of his accomplish-
ment.

His name will be an ensign; and his acts
The inspiration of his countrymen.

Douglas. You yet will know his magna-
nimity

Which girdled round the ample continent
Of his performance like the boundless sea.

Bruce. I'm glad to think—to know the best
of him.

Shall we turn back and meet our friends?

Isabella. Yes; come.

And, Douglas, tell us more of Wallace, pray.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room in the* EARL OF
BUCHAN'S *Castle. Enter the* EARL *and*
the COUNTESS OF BUCHAN, *and the*
EARL OF FIFE.

Countess of Buchan. Once more, I beg you,
brother, on my knees,

To undertake the duty of your race.

Now, while I plead, they may be crowning
him,

And no Macduff to gird his curling hair.

Eleven kings from Malcolm Canmore's time

Our ancestors have perfected with gold,

Laying the ruddy chaplet on their brows

Like magic dawn that tops the day with light.

It is a custom that has come to mean

The thing it garnished; and he cannot be

The King of Scots, however just his claim,

However consecrated, sceptred, throned,
Who is not crowned by you.

Fife. I am the friend
Of England, of your husband ; finally
Be answered I beseech you. If you plead
Again with such hot vehemence, I'll think
Your husband is a fool to slight the word
That birds have carried of the Bruce and
you.

Countess of Buchan. If I were richer than
to need your help,
I'd let you know that brother's quality
Who dares to doubt his mother's daughter.
Shame !
But I am passionate, and so are you :
You meant no wrong. You'll do this, will
you not ?

Fife. Why ! here's a woman ! — What a
woman ! Well !
I tell you I am England's friend, which means
The foe of any upstart such as Bruce ;

And I am Buchan's friend, which means the
foe
Of Buchan's mortal foe the outlaw Bruce.
I tell you this, and yet you beg of me
To do for Bruce the service needed most
To make him mighty in his enmity.

Countess of Buchan. If you were armed to
fight a champion,
And he had lost his helm before you met,
You would not do despite to chivalry,
And take advantage of his naked head,
But find him in a morion, or unclasp
Your own, and equally defended, charge.
Be chivalrous to Bruce; make him a king
That Edward may be vantageless in that.
Then fight for Edward, with your puissance,
fight.

Fife. I think you're mad. This pertinacity,
Which you intend shall urge me to comply—
Which you conceive no doubt a sign of
strength,
But which I judge a sign of vanity—

Is one of women's weapons, well-approved,
With which she jags to death a stronger will.
But my resolve is harnessed, and your dart
Turns off it blunt—and spent, I hope.

Buchan. You hear ;
I said you could not move him.—Come
away.—

I'm sorry you have set your mind on this.

[*Exeunt FIFE and BUCHAN.*]

Countess of Buchan. To toss my hair, to
weep, to rate my maid,
Are small reliefs I ne'er resorted to ;
And now I must do something notable.
What if I went and crowned the Bruce myself?
Ah ! here's a thought that's like a draught of
wine !

My brother, whose the office is, resiles :
Mine—mine it is !—But how?—but if I did?
Their tongues, their tongues ! their fou
imaginings !

Is the world wicked as its thought is?—Love?
'There's no one would believe me if I vowed

Upon my death-bed, between heaven and
earth,

I understand no meaning in the word.

Maidens have lovers, and they sigh and wake ;

Wives love their husbands, and they wake and
weep :

But never, never have I loved a man,

As I see women love—with bursting hearts,

With fire and snow at variance in their cheeks,

With arching smiles, the heraldry of joy,

Whose rainbow shadows shine on hot hard
tears ;

With cruel passion, dying ecstasy,

With rapture of the resurrection-morn.

I have not loved. It may be to my shame,

But justly to the world's, condemning me

For deeds no cause could work me to commit.

If I take horse to Scone, farewell my fame,

Which halts yet at the threshold.—Who's
this ?

[*Enter* JAMES CROMBE.

Crombe !—

Do you remember in my father's house

Your life once stood in danger for a crime—

Which I'll not name—when mercy at my
plea
Was meted you in place of punishment ?

Crombe. Well I remember.

Countess of Buchan. You were thankful
then,
And held your life at my command. The
time—

Crombe. My lady, if some service you
require
Perilling my life, I'll do it willingly ;
But had you urged my love, my duteous love ;
And not my debt, I had been happier.

Countess of Buchan. I beg your pardon, sir.
Indeed, I think
The service I require may cost your life,
But surely something dearer. I am whirled
From thought to thought : my mind lacks
breath. Good Crombe,
You owe me nothing. Will you, if I bid,

Procure me black dishonour, and yourself
A name of loathing ?

Crombe. No, my lady.

Countess of Buchan. How ?

Crombe. If I beheld you hurrying to your
shame
I'd keep your honour holy with my sword,
And send it hot to heaven.

Countess of Buchan. Well.—You're a Scot ?
I mean, you long for Scotland's freedom.

Crombe. Yes.

Countess of Buchan. Are you acquainted
with the news ?

Crombe. Of Bruce ?
I've heard they mean to crown him king to-
day ;
But since my lord of Fife is England's friend—

Countess of Buchan. Yes, yes ! But are you glad ?

Crombe. Most heartily.
I think of joining Bruce.

Countess of Buchan. My timorous heart,
Fie, fie !—I knew you were a noble man.
You will put no construction but the right
On what I mean to do. Both you and I
Must be dishonoured in the world's regard :
I, an unfaithful wife ; you, go-between.
Saddle two horses ; lead them secretly
A mile beyond the castle. There I'll mount,
And ride with you to Scone. Go, instantly.
I, Isobel Macduff, will crown Bruce king.

Crombe. But, noble lady—not for fear but
safety—
What of pursuit ?

Countess of Buchan. Pursuit ? I am a mint,
And coin ideas. Come—come out ! It's
gold !

My husband's horses must be aired to-day.
You'll see it done. Some of the grooms we'll
bribe,
And some will come unbought, and some
we'll force
Either to follow us, or quit their steeds.
Leave nothing in the stables that can run.
My lords—ha, ha!—are nowhere in the
chase.

Crombe. Captain, and countess, mistress,
service-worthy,
Be confident in me, as I in you,
And the deed's done.

[*Exit.*

Countess of Buchan. Now world, wag, wag,
your tongues!

I sacrifice my fame to make a king :
And he will raise this nation's head again
That lies so low ; and they will honour him ;
And afterwards, perhaps, they'll honour me.
Or if they slight me and my modest work,
I will be dead : I have enough to bear

Of disrespect and slander here to-day,
Without forecasting railing epitaphs.
But some—nay, many of the worthiest,
And many simple judgments too, will see
The sunlight on my deed. This, I make
sure ;

No Scot's allegiance can be held from Bruce
Because he was not crowned by a Macduff.—
And if I love him, what is that to him ?
That's a good saying. So is this, I make :
If I do love him, what is that to me !

[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—WESTMINSTER. *The Hall of the Palace. KING EDWARD I. on a throne of state. In attendance, lords PEMBROKE, PERCY, CLIFFORD, and other lords, gentlemen, and officers. Enter SIR PETER MALLORIE with SIR WILLIAM WALLACE, bound and guarded.*

Edward I. Proceed with the impeachment,
Mallorie.

Mallorie. Sir William Wallace, knight of
Elderslie,
Some time usurping Guardian of Scotland,
You are a traitor to the English crown—

Wallace. I am no traitor to the English
crown,
For I was never subject to King Edward.

Mallorie. Therein your treason rests. But
speak not now :
You may speak afterwards in your defence.

Wallace. I will speak now, not to excuse my
deeds,
But to arraign the falsest traitor here.
Edward of England, if one pure pulse beats
In that debauched and enervated core,
Which was your conscience, I will make it
ache.

Edward I. What do you mean? To have
us think you mad,
And to your frailty that compassion show,
Which crimes and sins forbid us to extend ?
Or are you posing as a prodigy
Of heroism ? In their minstrelsy
They sing of captive knights whose bold
address
In presence of their victors won them grace :
But know that justice sees no worth in words—
Deeds only : therefore hear your deeds re-
hearsed.

Mallorie. Sir William Wallace, treasons manifold—

Wallace. I crave the pardon of all manhood here.

Having small use for any faculty
Since I became a captive, I have slacked
The rigour of my will, and thus it is
I spoke with petulance before my time.
Proceed to read my accusation, sir.

Mallorie. You are accused of many treasonous acts

Done on the persons, castles, cities, lands,
Of our most noble sovereign, Edward First,
In England and in Scotland—

Wallace. But, explain—

Edward I. Silence, guilty felon !

Wallace. Guilty? Condemned,
And hanged already, doubtless, in your heart.
I will confess my guilt, for I am guilty—

Guilty of failure in a righteous cause.
I will confess that when ill-fortune came
My friends forsook me ; that I lost the day
At Falkirk, and have since been little worth.
I stayed your accusation, sir, to ask
What treason I could work against a king
Whom I acknowledge not, and in a land
Not governed by that king ?

Edward I. Silence !—Proceed.

Wallace. What ! English Edward ! Would
you roar me down ?
My deeds have spoken : shall I fear your
tongue ?
The charge against me is irrelevant ;
No jurisdiction have you over me
To pardon or to doom : prisoner of war,
No traitor, I ; and here I make demand
For knightly treatment at the hands of
knights.

Edward I. You shall have justice.

Wallace. In the end I shall :
And so shall you. Death you have often
faced ;
Justice you shall see once.

Edward I. Stay, Mallorie.
We'll tutor this heroic insolence.—
The observant world has notched the life of
man,
And three main periods indicate three powers
Whose dreadful might directs our very stars.
These powers take reason's throne, the
intellect.
First, love usurps, like Saturn come again—
Whose orb is yet man's most malignant foe—
Turning the sad, outlandish time of youth
Into a golden age. Ambition rules
With godly sway the second period,
And marshals man's capacity to war
Against the evils that beset him most,
And win what things of worship he desires.
Prudence, which none but old men under-
stand
To be the strongest tyrant of the three,

Reigns lastly, making peace with God and
man ;

Securing acquisitions ; peering forth
Into the future, like a mariner,
Whose freight is landed in a foreign port,
With wistful homeward gaze, but eager yet
To see his merchandize disposed of well.
And reason, which should rule, most cheer-
fully

Accepts the ministry beneath these kings.

This is the chronicle of noble men.

The sun gleams lurid through a rotting fog,
And those pure powers that shine in lucent
souls,

Clear, as if lanterned only by the air,
In natures base, burn with a murky flame,
As lust, concupiscence, and avarice :

And reason, mad with degradation; toils
Unwillingly in slavish offices.

Now comes my application. Cruel, vain,
Intolerant, unjust, false, murderous,
You, Wallace—rebel, outlaw, hangman, fool,
Incendiary, reiver, ravisher—
You are the serf of vile concupiscence—

Yea, of the vilest famine—hungry greed
Of notoriety!—the commonest,
The meanest, lewdest, gauntest appetite,
That drives the ignoble to extremity!
No sooner had we quarried painfully,
Forth of that chaos left by your King John,
A corner-stone for righteous government,
Than you and other itching malcontents
With gothic hands o’erturned the fane of
 peace,
And on your groaning land brought heathen
 war,
That you might win the name of patriot.
Again I built up order; and again
You overthrew my government, and caused
Your fatherland—heroic patriot!—
From Tweed to Moray Frith to swim in
 blood,
Before divine authority could rule.
Still you rebelled; for you must stand
 alone—
And think not, lords, I over-rate the strength
Of this delirious thirst for some repute—

Though nobles, knights, burgesses, yeomen,
 priests,
Yea, every Scot, well-pleased, acknowledged
 us,
You—cast-off guardian—dog that had his
 day—
Alone, unfriended, starving in the wilds,
Held there aloof, and signalized your night
By howling for that moon you almost
 clutched,
A tyrant's power, calling it liberty :
For that was still behind your lust of fame.

Mallorie. You're silent now.

A Lord. Silence becomes him well.
This just exposure stills his shameful voice.

Wallace. Seeing how your rage leapt from
 your lips in lies,
King, I bethink me ere I make reply,
Lest I, too, throw the truth.

Edward I. Now tell us, lords,

Are we on our defence or Wallace? which?
Villain, regard law's form if not its soul.
Be better mannered; touch your memory;
You stand before the majesty of England.

Wallace. I stand there truly; but behind
me pants
The king of terrors; and his quiver holds
One dart I hope to parry, which I fear—
But not the venom'd shaft that nothing
fends.
It is—not now; I'll tell you afterwards.—
Noble?—ignoble?—who shall judge us, king?
This deed and that we may with help of
heaven
Christen or damn, and not be far astray;
But who shall take upon him to declare
The mind of God on what is unrevealed,
The guiding thought, deep, secret, which is
known,
Even to the thinker, but in passing wafts.
Because my life was spent in thwarting you,
I am not therefore an incarnate fiend,
Although the justice of the end I stayed

Possessed your soul to sickening. Mad for
fame! —

My wife's, my father's, and my brothers'
deaths—

Edward I. No more of this. Call in the
witnesses.

Wallace. I'll speak now, and be heard.

All. Silence! Be still.

Wallace. I can outroar you all. Sound
trumpets, drums,
And fill your hall with clamour, I shall speak,
And you shall hear. Above the voice of war
I have been heard, and—

All. Silence, traitor, silence!

[*The shouting continues for a little, but gradually ceases as WALLACE speaks on.*]

Wallace. I fought for liberty and not for
fame.

Monarchs know not the inestimable worth
Of that imperial, rich diadem
Which only crowns both kings and carls, men.
Say, slavery unfelt were possible,
Then freedom is a name for sounding wind.
But call me slave in any mincing term ;
And let the tyrant's frowns be smiles of love ;
The chains, less galling than a lady's arms ;
The labour, just my pleasure's ministry :
If I surrender to the conqueror,
As captive is my soul, as though thick irons
Wore through my flesh, and rusting in my
 blood,
Rasped on my bones, the while with lash and
 oath
Some vicious tasker held me to hard toil.
I stand here free, though bound and doomed
 to die.
And know, King Edward, every Scot, who
 bent,
Gnawing his heart, a recreant knee to you,
Perjured himself, being free ; and even now—
I know my countrymen—contrite they rise ;
And when they have another leader—one,

Abler than I—pray heaven, more fortunate!—
They will anew throw off your galling yoke,
And be, once more, lieges of liberty.
I am the heart of Scotland ; when I die
It shall take heart again—

Edward I. No, no ! by heaven !
The Scots repudiate you !

Wallace. The Scots do not :
The people, pulse for pulse, beat warm with
me.

Edward I. You lie ! You lie !—But I forget
myself.
Freebooters, prodigals, scroyles — outcasts
all—
Your sole supporters, may lament your end ;
But true men everywhere are jubilant.
Not England only, and the better part
Of your divided country were your foes ;
But from the world's beginning you were
doomed
To fail in your unholy enterprize.

For destiny, whose servant nature is,
Ordained by the creation of this land—
So long sore vexed by chance, fate's enemy,
With heptarchies, divisions, kings and clans—
That one king and one people here should
 dwell,

Clasped in the sea's embrace, happy and safe
As heaven is, anchored in eternity.

In fighting me you fought fate's champion,
Anointed with the fitness of the time,
And with the strength of his desire inspired,
To finish nature's work in Albion.

You, paltry minion of a band of knaves,
In name of patriotism—which in this case
Was in the devil's name—fought against God ;
The coming of His kingdom hindered here.

Now His sure vengeance has o'ertaken you,
And over both our lands His sweet peace
 reigns.

Wallace. Eternal God, record this blas-
 phemy !

Who doubts our lands are destined to be one ?
Who does not pray for that accomplishment ?

Why! Know you not that is the period,
The ultimate effect I battled for,
That you, free English, and that we, free
Scots,
May one day be free Britons. And we shall ;
For Scotland never will be tributary :
We are your equals, not to be enslaved ;
We are your kin, your brothers, to be loved.
Time is not ripe : fate's crescent purposes,
Like aloe-trees, bloom not by forcing them ;
But seasonable changes, mellowing years,
Elaborative ages, must mature
The destined blossoms. Listen, king and
lords ;
Here is a thing worthy remembering,
And which perhaps you never rightly knew :
Duty is always to the owner done ;
And the immediate debtor wisely pays :
The heritage of duty unperformed
Increases out of sight of usury.
Restore to Scotland freedom. Do that, king,
Or it will be required from you or yours
With woeful interest.—I have done. I
feared

I might not find a way to speak these truths,
Having no nimble tongue, and die oppressed
With warning unpronounced. I truly
thought

I could command a hearing had I words.
Death now, the due of all, my triumph, waits.

Edward I. (*coughing.*) The witnesses,
Sir Peter Mallorie ;
Your accusation now is needless.

Mallorie. Sire,
Hugh Beaumont is the first. He'll testify
Of early deeds in the arch-traitor's life.
He is an old man now and garrulous :
A gentleman withal, whose gentle blood
Stood him in little stead, when windy youth
Had sown itself, and whirling poverty
Down to the barren common dashed his
head.

So with his sword he battened as he might,
And valour was his star. Let him have
scope,
For he has much to say.

[HUGH BEAUMONT *is led in.*

Inform the king
As strictly as to God of all that passed
Between you and the prisoner.

Edward I. Speak the truth.

Beaumont. Your gracious majesty, what I
can tell
Is liker fable ; but the noble knight,
The prisoner, will acknowledge all I say :
Much of it honours him.—To Ayr he came
One day, disguised, with hat down, cloak
pulled up.

There as he paced the street, Lord Percy's
man
Seized on some fish a burgher just had
bought ;
Whereat, Sir William, like a smouldering fire,
Flared up to burn the foot whose thoughtless
kick
Had tortured it to flame. In speechless rage

He grasped the caitiff's throat and smote him
dead.

About two score well harnessed Englishmen,
With whom I was, did straight environ him.
Against a wall he bore which seemed to be
Rather upheld by him than him unholding,
And reaped us down like corn. He did, my
lords.

He multiplied his strokes so that he seemed
To multiply himself; there did appear
Opposed to every soldier there, a Wallace.
Without or helm or mail, in summer-weed,
Grass-green, flowered red with blood, he
fought us all,

Till one that bit the dust writhed near enough
To pierce him in the leg and then he fell.
Yet even so he might have won away ;
But as he rose he fetched a blow at me,
Which I eluding, down his breaking brand
Upon the causeway struck ; and in his eyes
A light went out, when his up-lifted hand
Showed but the hilt. In faith I pitied him.
I pitied him, and bore him to the tower.
There in a filthy dungeon he expired

Of festering wounds and food that swine
refused,
Ere they had settled what death was his due.

Edward I. But he is here alive?

Beaumont. Pardon, dread lord ;
He seemed at that time dead : the West
mourned for him :

His aged nurse bought his corrupting corpse
To bury it decently in hallowed ground.—

Well, after that a while, in Lanark-town,
I waited in the High Street on the judge,
Lord Ormesby, then on circuit in the west.
Four men were with me. One, on fire with
wine,

A braggart at the best, vaunted his deeds.
And when two men came down the street, he
cried,

“ See yonder stalks a canny muffled Scot,
A strapper, by this light ! attended, too !
He’s like to have that may be taxable.
Something I’ll mulct him of ; or something
give,

That shall be worse than nothing, namely
blows !”

“ Belike,” said I, “that boon will not go quit.
His side is guarded by a lengthy purse,
Whose bright contents, I think, he will not
hoard.”

“ I’ll have his sword,” quoth he, “If he refuse,
Take it, and beat him with it, till he shake
His dastard body out of his habergeon ;
Which, leaving here, he’ll give me hearty
thanks,

That I leave him his skin, the lousy Scot !”
And so he staggered out to meet the two.
The muffled stranger whispered to his man,
And he sped on before in anxious haste,
Dodging the drunk man’s outstretched arm,
Who said, “ Well, you may go ; your master
is behind.”

And when the master came he stopped him,
saying,

“ Knave Scot, unveil ! Come, show your
sonsy face.

Vile thief, where did you steal this tabard
green ?

And where the devil got you this fair knife ?
What ! jewelled in the hilt ! Unbuckle, quick,
Mantle and whittle ; and to make amends
For having ever worn them clasp them both
About me, and you shall have leave to go."

"St. Andrew ! There's my whittle, English
dog !"

And with a thrust the Scot let out his life.
We others rushed upon him instantly,
Shouting, "Down with him ! Vengeance on
the Scot !"

He gave us back, "St. Andrew, and the right !"
Wrapping his arm in what had wrapped his
face,

And looking like the lion that he was.
Beholding him I trembled, and stood still ;
But one more rash ran on, to shriek and fall,
His raised right arm lopped at the shoulder
off.

With that a voice cried, "In the king's name,
peace !"

The Scot looked up and saw a troop approach.
"Too great a pack for one," he said, and ran.
Now this was Ormesby, the justiciary,

Arrived in Lanark to dispense the law,
With Hazelrig, the ruler of the shire.

Mallorie. (aside to Beaumont). Quick man !
be quick ! Look how his highness chafes !

Beaumont. The valiant Scot was Wallace.
It appeared

His foster-mother, who had paid away
The earnings of her lifetime for his corpse,
Kissing, and weeping o'er it, saw a spark
Struggle with night of death ; or else her
hope

Inspired new breath, much aided by her
prayers.

The little glow she nursed into a flame,
So feeble, that, lest meat should smother it,
Her daughter gave one of her bosom's
springs,

Then at high-tide to feed her new-born babe,
For the replenishing his body's lamp.
Being recovered, he had come to see
His wife, who dwelt in Lanark.

Wallace. (*aside*). God ! O God !

Beaumont. Hazelrig led the chase. I followed close.

We reached the house. I searched the garden. There,

Scarcely concealed, I saw the prisoner. Sire,
I'm not a coward, and I was not then ;
But from the instant that I recognised
The dead man come alive, enchantment
caught

My spirit in a toil, and made me watch
Powerless and voiceless, all he did. I felt
No movement, even while I followed him.

There was some witchery I do believe.

In by the window when the search was o'er,
He entered, saying gaily to his wife,

"I almost think an English louredane saw me.
How thin a thicket hides a dread discovery !"
Then seeing on the floor his lady lie,

"O God ! what varied truth was in that
word !

Not dead, my love !" She spoke that I
could hear.

“ Dying, dying. Hazelrig has killed me
My spirit clings still to my lips to kiss you.
I would my soul might melt into a kiss
To lie on your lips till your soul’s release,
And then to heaven together we would fly.
Avenge my death and Scotland’s wrongs.”

“ My love ! ”

He cried ; and all his strength was water.
And long he held her : and he shook and
sobbed.

Wallace. (straining his bonds.) Nay, hang
me !—burn me !—I am sawn asunder !

Beaumont. At length he put her softly on a
seat,
And took her hand, and knelt : and she was
dead.

Her face was like an angel’s fallen asleep.
Upon her bloody breast his eyes he fixed,
Seeming unruffled as a still white flame,
And words, more dread than silence, spake
aloud.

“ I will avenge thy death and Scotland’s wrongs.

For every tear that now my eyes have dropped
From English veins shall seas of blood be shed.

Each sigh of mine shall have ten thousand echoes :

Yea, for her death, I’ll England sepulchre.
O, glutton grave, a surfeit shall be thine !
Death’s self shall sleep before my vengeance flags.”

Slowly retiring with his face to her
He went. I have not seen him since till now.
He was a young man then.

[*Voices within.*

Edward I. What noise is that ?

Clifford. A messenger, my lord, would force the door.

Edward I. Whence comes he ?

Clifford. From the north, your majesty.

Edward I. Admit him.

(*Enter MESSENGER.*)

Welcome, sir. Your news at once,
Plainly and nakedly.

Messenger. Comyn is dead :
Slain in Dumfries by Bruce ; whose party then,
Led by the fiery Edward, mad as he,
Attacked and seized the castle. On the day
I left the north, in Scone, the Lady Buchan,
The Bruce's paramour, Fife's sister, crowned
Her murderous lover king. Some lords and
knights
Have gathered round him, and he lies at
Perth.

Edward I. Besotted fool ! But it is well.
Herein

I see God's hand hardening the heart of Bruce
Against me, who am but God's minister,
That I may cut him off. I give God thanks.
Wallace—What ! has he swooned ?

Mallorie. He's in a trance.
Wallace !—Well, this is strange !—Wallace !

Wallace. (starting). My lords !

Edward I. We'll countenance this mockery
no more.

All England and all Scotland—all the world
Prejudge your fate. Wherefore we will not
then

Waste time in tedious processes of law
To find you, as we know you, dyed in guilt,
And leave another to pursue unchecked
A course of similar iniquity.
You for your treason are condemned to die
The death that traitors merit. Lead him
hence.

Come after me, my lords, immediately,
And take your charges for the north.

[*Exit EDWARD I. attended. WALLACE
is led away. As they go out they
regard each other fixedly.*

Clifford. I think
The king but whiled the time with Wallace
here,
Till news should come from Scotland.

Pembroke. With what haste
He sentenced him !

Percy. Yes ; as a gamesome cat
Diverted with a mouse, scenting another,
Gobbles the captive quick.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the* EARL OF BUCHAN'S
Castle. Enter the EARL OF BUCHAN.

Buchan. This is not jealousy. I only ache
With sorrow that my trust has been reposed
In falseness; and I feel—I fear I feel
The whole world's finger quivering with
scorn,
Stream venom at me. If I cannot sleep,
It is no wonder, for the laugh I hear,
Like icy water rippling—cold and true
As tested steel—so wise, so absolute,—
Is learned from those that know me by the
fiend
Who watches with me nightly. Jealousy?
If it possessed me, mortal sickness, bonds,
Nothing in heaven or hell, would hold me
back

From sating it with blood—with hers and
his.

But I will not be jealous, like poor souls,
Whose vanity engrosses every thought,
And calls itself nobility ; not I.

I will devise some vengeance, some just
means,

Some condign punishment, the world will
praise,

Thinking of me more highly than before
This miserable time.

Enter FIFE.

Fife. Brooding again !

Pluck up some sprightliness, for I have news.
Pembroke has routed Bruce in Methven
wood,

And captured many leading rebels. Bruce,
Who showed himself a gallant warrior,
Proved in retreat wise as a veteran,
Escaping to the north.

Buchan. My wife ?

Fife. They say
That she and other ladies northward too
In Nigel Bruce's charge escaped with speed.

Buchan. And is this sure?

Fife. I well believe it. Come,
Question the man who told me.

Buchan. If it's true
We'll join our powers and hunt the rebels down
Like noxious vermin, as they are.

Fife. Be cool.
What means this bitter passion?

Buchan. Am I hot?
But you'll combine with me?

Fife. Assuredly:
It is a noble chase; the quarry, game
To wind us over Scotland. Tally-ho!

Buchan. Now you are thoughtless. Come,
the messenger.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—THE WOOD OF DROME. *Scotch
soldiers about a watch-fire.*

1st Soldier. What clouted loons we are !
Royal beadsmen ! Eh ?

2nd Soldier. The king's as ragged as the
rest.

1st Soldier. That's true.

To-day I hunted with him, and I thought,
Seeing his doublet, loop-holed, frayed and
fringed ;

His swaddled legs, and home-made shoes of
pelt ;

His barbarous beard and hair, and freckled
face,

That manhood's surely more than royalty ;
For through this weedy, nettle-grown decay,
A majesty appeared that distanced us,
Even as a ruined palace overbears
A hamlet's desolation.

Enter BRUCE, unperceived

3rd Soldier. He's a king
By nature ; through descent we're lost in
churls.

2nd Soldier. Ay, ay ; but mark : I'll reason
of our state.

Here many days we've wasted in the wild,
Chased by the English like the deer we chase,
Exposed like them, without their native wont,
Beneath this fickle, rigorous northern clime,
Ill-fed, ill-clad, and excommunicate ;
While decent burghers—Scots as true as we—
Live warm, and prosper with their families.
I think we're fools.

1st Soldier. Fools for ourselves, maybe,
But wise I hope for Scotland : and the folk
In every town and village think us wise,
And bless and pray for us.

Bruce. (aside). A brave heart that—
(*Advancing*) Good evening, comrades. Can
you guess the time ?

1st Soldier. An hour past sunset. Look, your
majesty ;
Barred by these trunks the cloudy embers
burn
Where day is going out.

Bruce. Faintly I see.
Your fire's so bright it dims the distant glow.
Sit down again, good friends.

1st Soldier. A story, sir ?

2nd Soldier. O, pray you tell us one !

Bruce. I think I will.
I've told you many tales of chivalry,
Of faerie, and of Greeks and Romans, too ;
But now I'll tell you of a Scotchman, one
Who lived when Ròme was most puissant
here.
The Roman governor, a valiant man,
Agricola, in whom ambition paused
Whenever prudence thought the utmost done,
Reconquered all the southern British tribes,
And drove his enemy beyond the Forth.

The noble Galgacus then swayed the realm
That stretches northward of that winding
stream ;

And while the Roman, building forts and
walls,

As was his wont, secured the bird in hand,
He mustered from his glens a skin-clad host
To fight for freedom. Ardoch, they call it,
Where the armies met. Ere the battle joined,
Firm on his chariot-floor with voice a-flame,
The Scottish chief harangued his thirty
thousand.

“Brothers,” he cried, “behold your enemies!
Gauls, Germans, Britons—mercenaries, slaves!
In conquest, one and strong ; but in defeat,
So many weaklings, heartless, hopeless, lost.
One signal victory to us were more
Than all the battles that our foes have won :
Their confidence is in their leader ; ours,
In our cause. Harken !—Had I a voice,
Like heaven’s thunder, I would shout across
This battle-field to be, to yon mixed throng,
And tell them they are Britons, Germans,
Gauls :

Bid them remember how in haughty Rome
Their free-born countrymen are taught to
serve

The wanton fancies of luxurious vice
In perfumed chambers or in bloody shows ;
Think of their wives and daughters, all
abused ;

Think of themselves, leagued with their conquerors

Armed and opposed against consanguine folk,
Placed in the van to bear the battle's brunt,
That Rome may triumph, and her blood not
shed :

Then would they turn and rend with us the
foe.

What need has Rome of Britain ? we, of
Rome ?

We, the last lonely people of the north,
A morsel merely, perilous and far,
Incite the eagle appetite of Rome,
Uncloyed until she gorges all the world.
No other need has Rome. Poor, desolate,
Shrouded with mists, with cold empanoplied,
At war among ourselves, fighting with beasts,

We yet are freemen ; and we need not Rome :
We are the only freemen in the world.

Here, in the very bosom of our land—
The last land in the world—we meet the
power

That rules all other lands but ours. Even
here

Let Rome be stricken. Brothers, countrymen,
Freedom has taken refuge in our hills.

She has a home upon the streaming seas,
But loves the land where men are hers. Let
not

The word go forth on woeful-sounding winds
That Rome has driven freedom from the
earth :

Sprite you with lions' hearts ; like baleful
stars

Inflame your eyes that their disastrous glance
May palsy foes afar ; pour your whole
strength

In every blow, nor fear a drought : the power
Of each is great as all when all are one.

Rush like a torrent ; crash like rocks that fall

When thunder rends the Grampians.
Liberty!

Shatter the Romans, grind them, overwhelm
them! Charge!"

The Scots were worthy of their gallant chief,
And fought as if they loved death, courting
her

By daring her to opportunities;
Which she—a maid o'er-wooed—resented oft,
And strained their cooler rivals to her breast;
But discipline—that rock that bears the
world,

Compactly built—a city on a cliff
Breaking disorder back like unknit waves—
Founded the Roman power; and on its
front

The Scots beat, shivered by their own outset;
And evening saw them ebb, calmed, van-
quished, spent.

Yet that lost battle was a gain: our hills,
That battle, and the ruin of her fleet,
Held Rome behind Grahame's dyke, and
kept us Scots.

All south of us the Romans, Saxons, Danes,

And Normans, conquering in turn, o'erthrew
From change to change ; but we are what we
were

Before Aeneas came to Italy,
Free Scots ; and though this great Planta-
genet
Seems now triumphant, we will break his
power.

Shall we not, comrades ?

1st Soldier. Yes, your majesty.

2nd Soldier. But might it not have been a
benefit

If Rome had conquered Scotland too, and
made

Between the Orkneys and the Channel Isles
One nation ?

Bruce. A subtle question, soldier ;
But profitless, requiring fate unwound.
It might be well were all the world at peace,
One commonwealth, or governed by one
king ;

It might be paradise ; but on the earth
You will not find a race so provident
As to be slaves to benefit their heirs.

1st Soldier. At least we will not.

Bruce. By St. Andrew, no !

(*Enter NIGEL BRUCE.*)

My brother Nigel ! Happy and amazed
I see you here. Why left you Aberdeen ?

Nigel. For several ends. And firstly, I
have news.

Bruce. Come to our cave.

Nigel. No ; for a reason, no.

Bruce. Mysteries, secrets !—Well ; retire
good friends.

[*Exeunt soldiers.*

Nigel. Perhaps my news is stale.

Bruce. Little I know
Since in the flight from Methven, panic-
struck
We parted company.

Nigel. Learn then that Haye—
Hugh de la Haye ; John is with you, I know—
Inchmartin, Fraser, Berclay, Somerville,
Young Randolph, Wishart, trusty Lamberton
Are captives.

Bruce. Half my world ! But is it true ?

Nigel. So much is certainty. Rumour
declares
Young Randolph has deserted us ; that those
I named will ransom ; but that some,
unknown,
Have died the death of traitors.

Bruce. Noble souls !
Randolf—poor boy ! What more ?

Nigel. A price
Is on your head.

Bruce. That matters not.

Nigel. I know.

Still have great heed of whom and how you
trust.

That's all the evil tidings. Hear the good.
The queen—Ah, this is she! I'll leave you
now.

Enter ISABELLA.!

Bruce. My dearest!

Isabella. I couldn't wait, my husband.
The lady Douglas and the lady Buchan
Are in your cave. We rode from Aberdeen
This evening, learning you were cantoned
here.

Douglas was sleeping when we came. His
wife

Bent o'er him, and she slipped into his
dream;

For when he waked he wondered not at all
To see his lady there, till memory

Aroused him quite to find the vision true.
Nigel was seeking you ; but when I saw
The joy these two partook, incontinent
I hurried out myself to find like cheer.
My dear way-faring hero, I have come
To share your crust, and rags, and greenwood
couch :

I'm deep in love with skied pavilions :
I'll be your shepherdess, Arcadian king.
This evening's journey lay throughout a
wood :

The honeysuckle incensed all the air,
And cushats cooed in every fragrant fir ;
Tall foxgloves nodded round the portly trees,
Like ruffling pages in the trains of knights ;
Above the wood sometimes a green hill
peered,

As if dame nature on her pillow turned
And showed a naked shoulder ; all the way,
Whispering along, rose-bushes blushed like
girls

That pass blood-stirring secrets fearfully,
Attending on a princess in her walk ;
I think with rarely scented breath they said

A loving wife was speeding to her lord.
Why are you silent ?

Bruce. I am thinking, dear,
That I'm the richest monarch in the world.
Possessing such a universe of love,
The treasure most desired by kings and
clowns.

Isabella. What universe, dear lord ?

Bruce. Simplicity !
How it becomes you ! Gentle hypocrite,
You are my universe of love, you know.

Isabella. Then keep your universe, and do
not waste
In empty space the time. I'll stay with you ;
Surely I can ? Come tell me all your plans.

Bruce. I've none. What I desire I know ;
and think
Firmly and honestly my wish is right.
Plans are for gods and rich men : I am poor.

Isabella. In spirit ? So you may be blame-
lessly ;
But are you, sir ?

Bruce. I hardly know. Just now
I tried to cheer a whining fellow here,
But stood myself in greater need of hope.

Isabella. I know—I understand. You need
to think

Of other things, my dear. I've heard of men,
Great men, exhausted even to lunacy
By just those labours that were beating
smooth

A thoroughfare for ever to success,
Repair themselves with youth's prerogative
That stops time and the world deposes, all
In favour of a dream ; or spend a while
With children or the simplest souls they
knew.

Come, you must be amused. But, tell me,
sir,
Am I to stay ?

Bruce. Yes, dearest pilgrim, yes.

Isabella. O, I am happy ! We will live like birds.

Bruce. And in the winter ?

Isabella. Winter ? What is it ?
This is the summer.

Bruce. Winter is—

Isabella. Hush !—hark !
What birds so late fly screaming overhead ?

Bruce. Stout capercailzies, hurrying to their
 nests,
Sated with fir-tops.

Isabella. Ah ! But, dearest lord
Are you quite well ? I haven't asked you yet.

Bruce. I am very well. And you ?

Isabella. See—look at me :
You used to know by gazing in my eyes.

Bruce. My wife, my lover, you are well indeed.

Isabella. The fire is nearly out. Come to the cave,
And there we will devise amusements, dear.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Another Part of the WOOD OF DROME. The EARL OF BUCHAN alone.*

Buchan. God help me and all jealous fools,
I pray!
The plagues of Hades leagued in one raw scourge
Might minister diversion to my soul,
Assailing through my flesh. No thought at all
Of starry space or void eternity;
Nor love, nor hate, nor vengeance, nor remorse—

My cousin's murder !—I've forgotten it !—
No sound of horns crackling with riotous
 breath
The crisp, rathe air ; no hounds ; no beckoning
 tunes
With notes of fiery down ; nor singing girls
Whose voices brood and bound ; nor chanting
 larks,
Nor hymning nightingales can touch my soul.
Nothing but torture unendurable
Wrought in the flesh has power on jealousy.
Slay him with agonies ? A passing swoon !
I'll kill my wife !
Her blood is Lethe if oblivion be
Save in more high-strung anguish of my own.

Enter FIFE.

Fife. What is it ? You have news.

Buchan. They are together—
The outlaw and your sister. They're at hand—
Three miles away—no more. A trusty spy
Told me just now.

Fife. Is there a band ?

Buchan. Some score.

Fife. Then we will take them.

Buchan. Yes.

Fife. About it straight.

[*Exit.*

Buchan. I'll follow—Ho !

(*Enter SPY.*)

I thought you still were near.
I haven't thanked you yet. (*Gives money.*)

How did she look ?

Was there about her not a thievish air,
A truant aspect, frightened and yet free,
Shame-faced, but bold, and like an angel lost.

Spy. Who, my good lord ?

Re-enter FIFE.

Buchan. The queen—the outlaw's wife.

Spy. O no, my lord ! She laughed, as she
rode past
Where I lay hid, at something gaily said
By my good lady, your good lordship's wife.
They both looked happy riding in the sun.

Buchan. Aye ; that will do.

[*Exit SPY.*

I'm coming, Fife.

Fife. Stay yet.

You've not deceived me ; and that fellow
knows—

A side-look told me—that you tried and failed.
You meant my sister when you questioned
him.

Tell me, what makes your jealousy so strong?
You never were in love with her I think.

Buchan. Nor am not now. I think—I
know—I feel

What I have heard : true love is never jealous.
I am like other men ; I love myself.

I cannot speak. I mean to act. Come on.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*A Cave in the Wood of DROME, with a fire at the back.* BRUCE, EDWARD, and NIGEL BRUCE, DOUGLAS, CROMBE, ISABELLA, COUNTESS OF BUCHAN, LADY DOUGLAS, and others.

Bruce. Who would build palaces when
homes like these

Our kingdom yields us bosomed in her hills !
What tapestry, where the gloss and colour
fade

From some love-story, overtold and stale,
Or where a famed old battle stagnates dim,
Befits a room before these unhewn walls
Whose shifting pictures lower and shine and
live,

Ruddy and dark in leaping of the fire.
No homely mice in cupboards cheep ; the
night

Is here not soothed by any mellow chirp
Of crickets, happily, devoutly busy ;
But in the ivy and the hollow oak

The owl has heard and learnt through day-
long dreams
The wind's high note when pines in ranks are
blown,
Bent, rent, and scattered with their roots in
air,
And sounds his echo loud and dwindling
long,
Fearfully as he flutters past our door ;
The wild-cat screams far off in the pheasant's
nest ;
The werwolf, ravening in the warren, growls.
Night is no gossip here, watching the world
Sick-tired, heart-sore, sleep weariness away ;
But free and noble, full of fantasy,
Queen of the earth, earth-bound, ethereal.

Isabella. (aside). His spirit rises. We must
hold it up.—

My lord, shall lady Douglas sing ?

Bruce. She shall.

Lady, I beg you sing us something sweet.

No trumpet notes, no war—

[*1st Soldier appears at the entrance of the cave. DOUGLAS whispers with him.*

What does he want?

Douglas. He comes as spokesman for his fellows.

Bruce. Well?

1st Soldier. (advancing.) I hope your highness will be patient with me.
My mates have bade me ask a favour, strange
And difficult to ask ; but not so strange
If it be thought of well, nor difficult
If I can keep my head.

Bruce. Go on.

1st. Soldier. My lord,
For this great while we have seen no woman's
face,
My mates and I : your highness knows that
well.
When we beheld these ladies enter here,

A longing seized us all to look on them ;
To see their faces and their gentle shapes ;
And even to have them turn their eyes on us ;
Perhaps to hear them speak. We are true
men,
And honest in our thought.

Bruce. Bring them all in.

[*Exit 1st Soldier.*

Countess of Buchan. I know the mood that
holds these men : brave lads !
If they were wed to women worth their love,
They would be nobler heroes than they are.

Isabella. We'll speak to them.

Countess of Buchan. I'll kiss that knave who
spoke.

Lady Douglas. Will you ?

Countess of Buchan. Yes ; and I'll do it
openly.

Enter SOLDIERS.

Bruce. Welcome all, heartily, most heartily.

Countess of Buchan (to 1st Soldier). Have you a wife?

1st Soldier. I have.

Countess of Buchan. You love her?

1st Soldier. Yes.

Countess of Buchan. Is not the truest love the most capricious?

1st Soldier. I cannot tell. True love is fanciful.

Countess of Buchan. You long to kiss your wife?

1st Soldier. And if I do,
What matters to your ladyship?

Countess of Buchan. (*whispering*). This, sir:
I also long to kiss one whom I love ;
Perhaps I never shall ; but I think now
In kissing you that I am kissing him.

[*Kisses him.*

1st Soldier. Thanks, noble lady. If you
were my wife
I'd kiss you thus.

[*He embraces and kisses her.*

Bruce. Well said and bravely done !

Countess of Buchan. And can you fight
As deftly as you kiss ?

Bruce. I warrant him ! Enough.
Your song, my lady Douglas ; sing it now ;
A love-song, something homely if you can.

Douglas. Sing " If she love me," sweetheart

Lady Douglas. Shall I ? Well.
But you should sing it rather.

Douglas. No ; sing you.

SONG.

Love, though tempests be unruly,
 Blooms as when the weather's fair :
If she love me truly, truly,
 She will love me in despair.

Is there aught endures here longer ?
 Can true love end ever wrongly ?
Death will make her love grow stronger,
 If she love me strongly, strongly.

Can scorn conquer love ? Can shame ?
 Though the meanest tower above me,
She will share my evil fame,
 If she love me, if she love me.

Enter a FORESTER.

Forester. A thousand men are on you, fly !

[*going*

Bruce. Stand, there !

Hold him ! What thousand men ? who lead
 them ? speak—

Put out the fire—stamp on it, some of you.

*[The fire is trampled out and the
FORESTER seized.]*

Forester. I know not; but I saw them in the
wood
Stealthily marching.

Bruce. Are they near?

Forester. An hour
By time, for they are stumbling out a way.
There's half a mile or so of wood between.
If I had been their guide they had been here.

Bruce. You know the paths so thoroughly?

Forester. Blindfold.

Bruce. Could you lead safely to Kildrummie
castle
A band of twenty?

Forester. When? to-night?

Bruce. Just now.

Forester. I think I could. But tell me,
sir : they say
That you're the king. Now are you ?

Bruce. I am he.

Forester. (*awkwardly.*) What must I do ?

Bruce. Wait patiently.—Good friends,
We'll yet postpone farewell. A little way
Together in the wood—

Edward Bruce. But must we fly ?
Ten are a thousand in a coward's sight ;
And they may be our friends. Defence even
here
Were not too rash against a hundred. What !
Is not despair achievement's mother ? Why !
The high, black night, a shout, a sudden
charge,
And we dispel this sheep-heart's fearful dream.

Bruce. Upon us march the earls of Fife and
Buchan,
With many hundred men. They have hunted
us
For days, and I have known. My spies are
caught
I fear, or they had not arrived so close
Without our knowledge. (*To Forester*). We
must thank you, friend,
For timely intimation of our plight.
The plan I formed still holds, and this is it.
Kildrummie will give shelter to our wives ;
Nigel will take them there : Douglas, one
way,
And I, another, as we may decide,
Splits up the scent,—and we shall all escape.

Edward Bruce. Brother and king—

Bruce. No more. In straits like these
Counsel's a Syren : if the leader list,
Wreck follows. Errant paths, straightly
pursued,

Soon reach the goal; while wiser, well-thought
ways

Wander about for fear of miry shoes.

And shall I hear one rasher than myself,

When wisdom would be folly!—Isabella,

A little way together, then farewell.—

[*To Forester.*

Friend, go before us.—Follow close. No
word

Above a whisper.

Isabella. Must I leave you then?

Why are we made so that we trust our hopes!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A passage in BERWICK CASTLE.*

Enter CROMBE as jailor, carrying food.

He opens a door, and the COUNTESS OF BUCHAN is discovered in a cage.

Countess of Buchan. (aside). O me !

Another ! I can court no more.

This one I'll take by storm.—Fellow, good friend,

I think you are my thousandth jailor. Soon I'll have a fresh one doubtless every day.

I've here had trial of my power on men,

On common vulgar men like you—for you

Are like your predecessors, I suppose—

And find myself most potent. Listen, now !

Yes, but you shall, you must ; and look as well :

For I have looks like golden lightning, swift,

Gentle and perilous, that fascinate
The worshipful beholder. I have words,
Sweet words, soft words, and words like two-
edged swords,
Like singing winds that rock the sense asleep,
Like waves full-breasted, filling deepest souls ;
And I will kill you in a thousand ways
With words and looks unless you yield you
now.

The others all were conquered just too late ;
The women tell me nothing—English all ;
But you will tell me what I want to know,
In brave submission to my witchery ;
Now, like a man : I hope you are a man.

Crombe. What must I tell you ?

Countess of Buchan. You must tell me first
How the king is—King Robert Bruce, I
mean.

Crombe. They say he's well.

Countess of Buchan. Where is he then ?
But sir,

I see you better now ; you have an eye,
A brow, a mouth. Without more question,
say
How Scotland fares since I was prisoned
here.

Crombe. Because of this same eye, and brow,
and mouth
They made me jailor.

Countess of Buchan. O, I understand !
And being nobler than those stolid pikes—
Pike-handles, I should say—forerunning you,
You'll not do wrong in duty's name. Escape
You cannot help me to ; but tell me, sir,
Some news.

Crombe. Ah! Pardon me. If, as you say,
I have a brain to know that wrong is wrong
Though soldierly obedience be its badge,
Shall I not have the strength to overcome
Rebellious righteousness? Think you—

Countess of Buchan. James Crombe !

Crombe. Your servant ever, lady.

Countess of Buchan. Pardon, friend ;
I did not know you. I've no memory
Except for horrors. I am half a beast—
Starved, frozen, scorched, in rags. Sometimes
at night
I'm mad. The rotten air, the subtle dark,
The clammy cold, crawl through my blood
like worms :
They knot themselves in aches, they gnaw
my flesh,
And I believe me dead. Ghosts visit me :
They come in undistinguishable throngs,
Sighing and moaning like a windy wood.
Demons invade my grave with flaming eyes,
With lolling tongues ; and ugly horrors steam
And whirl about me. Mountains topple
down,
Grazing my head ; and threatening worlds
approach,
But never overwhelm me. O my friend ! O me !
Tell me for mercy's sake of living men !
How came you here ?

Crombe. To be beside you, lady.

Countess of Buchan. What! You are weeping! Dear friend, speak to me.

What food is this? White bread, and wine, and meat!

(*Clapping her hands.*) Thanks, thanks! O thanks! I'll eat, while you recount All, all, about my friends!

Crombe. My time is brief.
And first I'll tell you of an enemy.
Edward the First is dead.

Countess of Buchan. Say you! Aha!
That was a mighty villain.

Crombe. Nigel is dead.
They killed him when they took Kildrummie tower.

Countess of Buchan. Ah, what a wanton waste of noble blood!
Remorseless tigers! Ah, the wolves, the rats!—
The queen, and lady Douglas?

Crombe. Prisoners both.

Countess of Buchan. The man, my husband?

Crombe. Beaten, decayed, forgot.

When we were scattered in the wood of
Drome,

The king sought refuge in an Irish isle,
Which in the spring he left, and dared his fate.
So after perils, and trials, and mighty acts,
And deeds of marvellous device—well poised
By those achievements, rare and manifold,
Heroically wrought by Edward Bruce,
Douglas, Boyd, Fraser, Gilbert de la Haye,
Randolf, and many another famous knight,
Whose deeds already ring in lands afar—
At Inverury he and your husband met :
And there the earl suffered such dread defeat,
That ignominy has become the grave
Where all his hopes lie buried.

Countess of Buchan. Wretched soul !

Crombe. Now in the length and breadth of
this free land,

One castle only is in England's power.
Would I had time to tell you how 'twas done!

Countess of Buchan. What castle?

Crombe. Stirling. Edward found the siege
For his hot blood too long, and made a pact,
That if the governor, Sir Philip Mowbray,
Were not relieved within a year and day,
He should surrender. In the interval
Sir Philip went to London to the king—
Edward the Second, an unstable man—
And couched his eyes of that security
That curtailed Scotland's state. He levied
soon
The mightiest army ever England raised;
And in the sight of Stirling Bruce and he
Are met to fight.

Countess of Buchan. Now?

Crombe. Now. And news is come
That Bruce to-day o'erthrew a champion
Between the armies; and that Randolf fought

And conquered Clifford, who had dreadful odds.

Countess of Buchan. And are they fighting now ?

Crombe. No ; but to-morrow
The battle is.

Countess of Buchan. Then, gallant friend,
away !

Take horse and ride ! You must not miss
to-morrow.

Spur through the night !—Nay, think no more
of me !

Or think me sitting lightsome on the croup,
And smiling at the moon. I go with you :
My soul is in your arm—You must not stay.
One stout heart more !—Ride, ride !—I thank
you, friend :

To know your dear and steadfast constancy,
As now I do, is worth these lonely years.—
Away to victory !—I can weep at last !—
Here, take this withered rag ! It is the scarf

The queen gave me that far-off night in
Drome.

My parched and desert eyes that sorrow shrunk
Are wet with happiness ! See ! Am I red ?
My pale and stagnant blood wakes up again,
I would that we were flying together, Crombe,
As once we did, rebels, so free and glad !
Now go ! Now go !—Yes, kiss me through
the bars.

My kiss shall help to win the battle. Go !

[*He kisses her, and exit. The
scene closes.*]

SCENE II.—*The SCOTTISH CAMP at Bannock-
burn. BRUCE in his tent at night.*

Bruce. This drowned and abject mood ; this
sodden brain ;
This broken-back ; this dull insanity,
That mopes and broods and has no thought
at all ;

This dross, that, in exchange for molten gold
Of madness thrice refined, were hell for
heaven ;

This flabby babe ; this hare ; this living
death ;

This sooty-hued, cold-blooded melancholy !
We know it for a subtle, potent lie—

A vapour, a mere mood ! But when it comes,
Stealing upon us like unwelcome sleep

In high festivity, we've no more power
To shake our souls alive, than if we'd drunk
Of Lapland philtres,—muddy brew of hell !
When we, like beakers brimmed with wine,
are full

Of living in the hand of fate, there strikes
An image through the brain that destines us,
And in the careless instant we are spilled
To be replenished never : so we feel.

We feel ? How hard it is to fix the mind !
Only less hard than to withdraw it. Sleep ?
No ; not to-night. Heart, faithless heart,
grow strong.

Ay, now I have remembrance of a thought

A dear breath whispered making wisdom
sweet.

How did she say it? "Darling" was it?
No.

"Sweetheart," or "dear," or "dearest?"
Which of all

Those thin worn words that love assays, and
coins

Anew, began her little earnest speech?

Ah, it was that name, fond and passionate,
Tender and confident, poor milkmaids use,
And dream not that a queen can find no
sweeter.

"Dearie," she said, "when faith is strong in
you,

Then only have you any right to think,
To judge, to act." And kissed me then, as
if

Her healing truth had need of honey! O,
Love with its simple glance can pierce the
night,

When drowsy sages at their tapers nod!
I will not trust myself but when self-trust
Is buoyant in me. And I surely know

To-morrow's battle finds one soul sufficient.—
I wonder how my wife is ! Have these years,
These days, these hours—it is the hours that
tell—

Dealt kindly with her in her nunnery ?
Poor lady ! She is gentle, delicate—
A lute that can respond to nothing harsh.
If she be shattered by this heavy stroke
Of separation ! I, with sinewy strings,
Endure the constant quivering—

(*Enter Guard*).

What now ?

Guard. The leaders wait without, your
majesty.

Bruce. Is it that time ? Well, bid them
enter.

[*Enter* EDWARD BRUCE, DOUGLAS, RANDOLF,
and WALTER THE STEWARD.

Friends,
Good morning. Let me see your eyes.—
Randolf

You have not slept.—Sir James, perhaps you have :

Your eyes were never dull.—What, half awake !

Why, Walter, love, if not anxiety,
Should have kept watch in that young head
of yours !

Brother, I know you slept.

Edward Bruce. Why should I not ?

I thanked God for the error that I made
In giving respite to the garrison,
Since it has brought us to this desperate pass
Where we must conquer. Then I slept, and
dreamt ;

And wakened, laughing at I know not what.

Randolf. I had no sleep. This would not
leave my mind,
That we were one to five.

Bruce. Why Randolf, shame !

You are the last who should complain of that.
What good knight was it, like a water-drop,

Lost shape and being in an English sea,
Which found him out a rock, but yesterday ?
Why man, you are my cousin, Thomas
 Randolf;
And this is Douglas; this, my brother
 Edward;
We are men who have done deeds, God
 helping us.
God helping us, we'll do a deed to-day !

Randolf. I do not fear; but lonely, in the
 night
I could not see how we must win.

Bruce. No ! come.

[*They go to the door of the tent and
 look out.*]

I see the battle as it will be fought.
The sun climbs up behind us. If he shine,
His beams will strike on English eyes. Look
 there !
The earth throws off her mourning nightly
 weed ;

And the fresh dawn, her bowermaid, coyly
comes
To veil her with the morning, like a bride
Worthy the sun's embrace. This fight you
dread,
Regard it as a happy tournament
Played at the marriage of the fragrant world,
If the full weight and awe of its intent
Press on you too o'erwhelmingly.

Randolf. Not I.
I'd rather lose the fight for what it is,
Than win it jestingly.

Bruce. Well said ! The night,
That filled you with its gloom, out of your
blood
Exhales, and it is day. Imagine, now :
Between high Stirling and the Bannock
stream,
Whose silvery streak hot blood will tarnish
soon,
Four battles stand. To westward, Edward's
charge,

Douglas and Walter to the north and east,
Randolf, the doubter, in the central van ;
I keep the second ward. Pent in this space
We cannot be outflanked, the river's gorge
On this wing, and on that, calthrops and pits.
The English archers scattered—Edward's
task—

There but remains to stand, while yonder
host,

Which leaves its revel only now, shall twine,
And knot, entangled in its proper coils,
Crammed in a cage too small for such a bulk,
Such sinuous length, such strength, to bustle
in,

Save to its own confusion and dismay.
Speak I not reasonably, and quietly ?

Randolf. Too quietly for me ! Why, in this
trap,

This coffin, they shall die for want of air !

Edward Bruce. It is too cheap a victory !

Douglas. When won,
I hope we may not find it all too dear.

[*Bagpipes, drums, trumpets.*

Bruce. Ha! now the din begins! My blood
is lit!

Come, let us set our soldiers in a glow!
After the abbot says the battle mass,
I'll speak to them, and touch them with a
flame.

Douglas. They'll burn.

Edward Bruce. They'll make a bon-fire.

Walter the Steward. To announce
That Scotland's liberty's of age.

Bruce. Well roared,
My lioncel!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The FIELD OF BANNOCKBURN.*

Enter EDWARD II., THE EARL OF
PEMBROKE, SIR GILES DE ARGENTINE,

SIR INGRAM DE UMFRAVILLE, *with other lords and knights, in advance of the English lines.*

Edward II. Will yon men fight?

Umfraville. Ay, siccarly. My liege,
If you will hear an old man's humble word
Who knows the Scotchmen well, feign a retreat :

Then will these fiery children of the north—
Children they are in every gift save strength,
And most in guileless daring—rush on us,
Leaving their vantage, and be overcome
Utterly, as in many a fight before.

Edward II. I'm a young warrior, and I
mean to win

By dint of strength, and not by strategy.
To sneak a victory I came not north ;
But in a lordly way to overthrow
The base usurper of my lordship here.
Leave paltry sleights and fawnings upon
chance

To starveling rebels, keen as hungry curs
That dodge the whip, and steal the bone at
once.

Think you we brought our friends across the
sea

To juggle with them? We are here to fight,
As in the lists, like gentlemen. My lords,
I give you Scotland. Nothing for myself
Save sovereignty I claim ; and that must be
Not snared by ambush, for assassins fit,
But seized by courage, frank and English.

Pembroke. Sire,
One reason only urges strategy :
Adopting it, less English blood will flow.

Edward II. That touches me.

De Argentine. And it is kindly thought.
But I have heard the Scotsmen plume them-
selves
On victory over any English odds,
In battles, pitched, embroiled, and hand to
hand ;

That we have never vanquished them in fight
Except when treachery assisted arms.
Conquest unchallengeable, dearly bought
Were worth its cost. A wily victory
Would leave our foes unhumbled, unappeased,
And confident of ultimate success.

Edward II. This is the wisest counsel.

Umfraville. Hear me yet.
What warrior is wiler than Bruce?
The schiltron he has perfected. No knights
Can break the Scottish spearmen. Chivalry
Means nought for them save mounted foes
whose trust
Is in their horses—

Edward II. 'Tis a base device,
This slaughter of our steeds! A dastard's
trick!
The delicate art of war, where excellence
Lay in the power of noble blood alone,
He makes a trade for ploughmen. Battle-
fields

Are shambles since this rebel taught his clowns
To fear not knighthood !

Umfraville. True indeed, my liege !
And some have thought that this new style of
war
Will drive the other out. But see you not
That every possible advantage—

Edward II. No !
For I will not!—Behold, the Scots ask mercy!

Umfraville. They do—from heaven. These
men will win or die.

Edward II. I hate such kneeling, whining
warriors, I !

What right have they to think God on their
side ?

Our glorious father taught them otherwise
With iteration one had deemed enough.
I burn to teach them finally. My lords,
Our swords shall pray for us. One hour's
hot work,

And Scotland is your own. Let us begin !
Each to his post, and everlasting shame
Blight him who cherishes a moment's thought
Of other means of victory than these,
Our English bows and lances, English hearts,
And not less English courage of our friends
Whose foreign banners grace our army.
Come ;
England shall stretch from Orkney to Land's
End
After to-day. St. George for Merry England !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Another part of the FIELD. The
Scottish army. Enter BRUCE and the
other leaders.*

Bruce. I think we all know well what courage
is :

Not thews, not blood, not bulk, not bravery :
Its highest title, patience. Fiery haste

Has lost most battles. Till the word be given,
Let no man charge to-day. No seeming flight
Must lead you to pursue. Take root ; grow
strong ;

The earth is Scottish. For our country stand
Like bastioned, frowning rocks that beard the
sea,

And triumph everlastingly. Doubt not
The time to charge will come—once and
straight home :

We'll need no spur : so must you curb your
blood ;

Command your anguished strength : a false
start now

Will lose a race we cannot run again.

If any of you feel unfit for fight

From any cause whatever, let him go,

Leaving us undiluted. Scorn nor curse

Shall blast him ; but our generous thought
shall praise

His act and consecrate his name,

As one who did his best in doing nought ;

For victory depends on each of us.

I say, if gallant souls be timorous,

Get them behind the hill, and be not sad :
Great courage goes to make an open coward.

(A great shout).

Then are we all one heart. Our enemies,
Our English enemies who hope to drown
The very name of Scot in Scottish blood,
And those outlandish battle-harlots, hired
From Holland, Zealand, Brabant, Normandy,
Those Picards, Flemings, Gascons, Guiennese,
The refuse of the realms from which they
swarm,
Are robbers lured by plunder, one and all,
From king to scullion : they are in the
wrong.

We are the weapon to defend the right
God grasps to-day. Can we be put to shame ?

Soldiers. No !

Bruce. Forward, trusty friends ! The hour
is come
For long-desired redemption of the vows
Groaned out when tender mothers, sisters,
wives,

Fathers we worshipped, brothers we adored,
Were spared not. Let our battle-cry be—
no ;

I'll give you none. Each soldier shout the
name.

Of that best friend in prison buried quick ;
Of yonder heaven-homed, most beloved soul
Among the multitude whose butchered limbs
Lie pledged in sepulchres. My countrymen,
Welcome to victory, which must be ours,
For death is freedom !

Soldiers. Victory or death !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*The GILLIES' HILL. Men and
women watching the battle.*

A Young Friar. "St. Andrew and St.
George ! Fight on ! fight on !"

A whole year's storms let loose on one small
lake

Prisoned among the mountains, rioting
Between the heathery slopes and rugged cliffs,
Dragging the water from its deepest lair,
Shaking it out like feathers on the blast ;
With shock on shock of thunder ; shower on
 shower
Of jagged and sultry lightning ; banners,
 crests,
Of rainbows torn and streaming, tossed and
 flung
From panting surge to surge ; where one
 strong sound,
Enduring with continuous piercing shriek
Whose pitch is ever heightened, still escapes
Wroth from the roaring whirl of elements ;
Where mass and motion, flash and colour
 spin,
Wrapped and confounded in their blent
 array :
And this all raving on a summer morn,
With unseen larks beside the golden sun,
And merest blue above ; with not a breeze
To fan the burdened rose-trees, or incense
With mimic rage the foamless rivulet,

That like a little child goes whispering
Along the woodland ways its happy thought ;
Were no more wild, grotesque, fantastical,
Uncouth, unnatural—and I would think
Impossible, but for the vision here—
Than is this clamorous and unsightly war,
Where swords and lances, shields and arrows,
 flash,
Whistle, and clang—splintered like icicles,
Eclipsed like moons, broken like reeds, like
 flames—
Lewd flames that lick themselves in burning
 lust—
With scorpion tongues lapping the lives of
 men ;
Where axes cut to hearts worth all the oaks ;
Where steel burns blue, and golden armours
 blaze—
One moment so, the next, a ruddier hue ;
Where brodered banners rustle in the charge,
And deck the carnage out—A skeleton,
Ribbonded and garlanded may sweetly suit
The morris-dancers for a May-pole now !—
Where hoofs of horses spatter brains of men,

And beat dull thunder from the shaking sod ;
Where yelling pibrochs, braying trumpets,
drums,

And shouts, and shrieks, and groans, hoarse,
shrill—a roar

That shatters hearing—echo to the sky ;
Where myriad ruthless vessels, freighted full
Of proud rich blood—with images of God,
Their reasoning souls, deposed from their
command—

By winds of cruel hate usurped and urged,
Are driven upon each other, split, and
wrecked,

And foundered deep as hell. The air is dark
With souls. I cannot look—I cannot see.

[*Kneels.*

A Woman. The battle's lost before it's well
begun.

Our men fall down in ranks like barley-rigs
Before a dense wet blast.

A Cripple. Despair itself
Can only die before the English bows.

O that they could come at them ! Who are
these
That skirt the marsh ?

Woman. My sight is weak. But see ;
Here's an old fellow, trembling, muttering.
Look.
How he is strung ; and what an eye he has !

Cripple. Old sight sees well away. I warrant,
now,
His is a perfect mirror of the fight.
You see well, father ?

Old Man. Ay. That's Edward Bruce ;
And none too soon. The feathered deaths
speed thick
In jubilant choirs, flight after singing flight.
That tune must end ; the nest be harried.
Ride,
Fiery Edward ! Yet our staunch hearts quail
not.
Ah ! now the daze begins ! I know it well.
The cloth-yard shafts like magic shuttles,
weave

Athwart the warped air dazzling, dire dismay,
And the beholder's blood slinks to his heart
Like moles from daylight ; all his sinews fade
To unsubstantial tinder. Ha ! spur ! spur !
There are ten thousand bowmen ! Gallop !
Charge !

Now, by the soul of Wallace, Edward Bruce,
The battle's balanced ! On your sword it
hangs !

Look you ; there's fighting ! Just a minute's
fight !

Tug, strain ! Throe after throe ! Travail of
war !

The birth—defeat and victory, those twins,
That in an instant breathe and die, and leave
So glorious and so dread a memory !—

The bowstring's cut ! What butchery to see !
They shear them down these English yeomen !
God !

It looks like child's play too ! And so it feels,
Now I remember me.—That's victory.

An English army is a mighty bow ;
The bowmen are the string ; the string is cut ;
The weapon's useless !

Woman. But the knights, the knights !

Old Man. I see them. But our spearmen !

Do you see !

This hill we stand on trembles with the shock :
They budge not, planted, founded in the soil.
Another charge ! Now watch ! Now see !

Ugh ! Ha !

Did one spear flicker ? One limb waver ?
No !

These fellows there are fighting for their land !
The English army through its cumbrous bulk
Thrilled and astounded to the utmost rear,
Twists like a snake, and folds into itself,
Rank pushed through rank. Now are they
hand to hand !

How short a front ! How close ! They're
sewn together

With steel cross-stitches, halbert over sword,
Spear across lance, and death the purfled
seam !

I never saw so fierce, so locked a fight !
That tireless brand that like a pliant flail

Threshes the lives from sheaves of English-
men,

Know you who wields it? Douglas, who
but he !

A noble meets him now. Clifford it is !

No bitterer foes seek out each other there.

Parried ! That told ! and that ! Clifford,
good night !

And Douglas shouts to Randolf ; Edward
Bruce

Cheers on the Steward ; while the king's
voice rings

In every Scotch ear : such a narrow strait
Confines this firth of war !

Young Friar. God gives me strength
Again to gaze with eyes unseared. Jewels !
These must be jewels peering in the grass,
Cloven from helmets, or on them : dead men's
eyes

Scarce shine so bright. The banners dip and
mount

Like masts at sea. The battle-field is slime,
A ruddy lather beaten up with blood !

Men slip ; and horses, stuck with shafts like
butts,
Sprawl, madly shrieking! No, I cannot look !
[*Exit.*

Woman. Look here ! look here, I say !
Who's this behind ?
His horse sinks down—the brute is dead, I
think.
His clothes are torn ; his face with dust and
sweat
Encrusted, baked, and cracked. He speaks ;
he shouts ;
And shouting runs this way. He's mad, I
think.

Cripple. He's made his hearers mad.
Tents, blankets, poles,
Pitch-forks, and staves, and knives, bran-
dished and spread
By women, children, grandsires ! What is
this ?

*Enter CROMBE followed by a crowd bear-
ing blankets for banners, and armed
with staves, etc.*

Crombe. I rode all night to strike a blow to-day :

The noblest lady living bade me go :

Her kiss is on my lips and in my soul.

Come after me—yea, with your naked hands,
And conquer weapons !

[*Exeunt, shouting.*]

SCENE VI.—*The FIELD OF BANNOCKBURN.*

*The Scotch Reserve. To them enter
BRUCE.*

Bruce. Most noble souls who wait so
patiently !

Your splendid faith is in the air about you ;

Your steady eyes shine like a galaxy ;

Your presence comforts me : pressed in the
fight,

The thought of you, like balm upon a wound,
Softened the thriftless aching of my heart.

The English waver ; on the hill behind

Our followers fright them, marching in array,
Bannered and armed, a legion out of heaven.

The tide of battle turns, and victory
Needs only you to launch it bravely forth.
Now—I would bid you think, but that the
thought

Eludes me, like a homely, old-known song,
Wreathing in fitful gusts beyond the sense—
Now will the lofty keystone of our life
Be pitched in heaven for ever. We have
dreamt

Our prayers into fulfilment many a time :
To-day we wrestle, and the victory's ours :
And yet I feel so scanty what it means,
That I'm ashamed. Enough : I know you
all.—

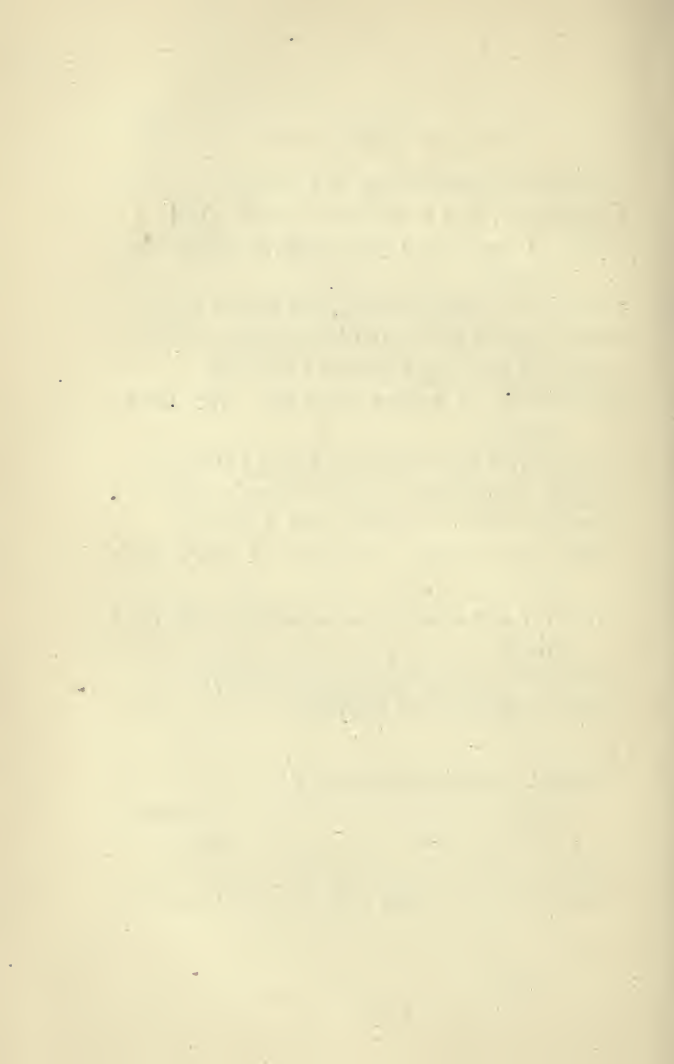
Now for our homes, our children, and our
wives,

For freedom, for our land, for victory !
And cry our old cry, Carrick !

Soldiers. Carrick and victory !

[*Exeunt.*

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